

The Socio-Cultural Side of Certification Programs:  
A Case Study of Green Globe in Barbados

by  
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### **Author's Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

Certification programs have grown exponentially over the past decade to respond to the increasing demand for more green and sustainable modes of operation from the part of customers. These schemes can be used as powerful tools to assist in the conservation of natural, human and cultural resources, helping better protect popular tourist destinations for future years to come. However, despite their potential to help codify important principles such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism, certification programs are currently facing several challenges that are hindering their overall practices. Much of the present tourism literature has examined the environmental aspect of these programs and the monitoring challenges they are currently facing. However, little research has explored the socio-cultural side of certification programs even if current literature increasingly demonstrates the strong connection that exists between environment, community and local culture when aiming to properly develop tourism in host destinations. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the importance and feasibility of adopting socio-cultural criteria in existing certification programs as to achieve proper sustainability. This goal is attained by using a qualitative research approach and by examining Green Globe certified hotels on the island of Barbados.

The results of this research confirms that the culture, history, geography and/or policies of a tourist destination can shape and influence certification programs and their overall practices. This study also provided several examples of social and cultural actions that hotels could adopt, or have already adopted, demonstrating that it is feasible for certification programs to require tourism businesses to adhere to socio-cultural criteria before achieving certification. Moreover, results revealed several benefits that the accommodation sector can gain by becoming environmentally, socially and culturally responsible. The main conclusion of this study is that socio-cultural practices are necessary components to properly achieve newer designations of ecotourism and sustainable tourism, and therefore, certification programs need to include and/or make mandatory socio-cultural criteria in their programs. It is hoped that this information can provide guidelines on how to further implement both environmental and socio-cultural criteria for both certification programs and the accommodation sector. Although this research revealed interesting information on the socio-cultural aspect of these programs, much remains to be examined on this matter and recommendations for future studies are suggested at the end of this thesis.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful husband Ross, whose support, confidence in me and optimism inspire me to always strive for excellence, helping me be a better person every day.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BDS	Barbadian Dollar
BHTA	Barbados Hotel & Tourism Association
BNP	Barbados National Party
BTA	Barbados Tourism Association
CHENACT	Caribbean Hotel Energy Efficiency Action project
CHTA	Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CM	Community member
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CST	Certification for Sustainable Tourism
CTO	Caribbean Tourism Organisation
DLP	Democratic Labour Party
FEMATOUR	Feasibility and Market Study for a European Ecolabel for Tourism Accommodation
FTC	Future Trust Centre
GCET	Global Code of Ethics of Tourism
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Ha	Hectares
HDI	Human Development Index
HE	Hotel employees
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISO	International Organisation of Standardization
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PPT	Pro-Poor Tourism
PRA	Participatory Research Action
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States
The Gap	St Lawrence Gap
TP	Tourism Professional
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organization

UNWTO

United Nations World Tourism Organisation

WTTC

World Travel & Tourism Council

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

With the rise in popularity of ecotourism and responsible travel amongst tourists, tourism businesses are increasingly being asked to achieve higher levels of environmental, socio-economic and cultural performances that will benefit host communities. This pressure from the public has pushed several tourism stakeholders, such as hotels and tour operators, to embrace more sustainable modes of management and operation (Medina, 2005; Buckley, 2002; Johnson, 2002). To help in the promotion and implementation of these initiatives, numerous certification programs have been created that require companies to achieve certain environmental and socio-cultural standards before obtaining certification. It is believed that when tourism businesses attain the necessary criteria, a destination's natural, human and cultural resources can be better protected for future generations (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004, Nicolau, 2008).

Through the use of their logo, certification programs can also offer marketing advantages to the certified tourism companies. The logo not only helps tourism businesses advertise their achievements to the general public, but can also assist travellers and consumers in selecting sustainable products and services over non-sustainable ones (Johnson, 2002; Mycoo, 2006; Buckley, 2002). As a result, a cycle starts occurring: to maintain their certification status and attract as much business as possible, tourism companies consistently ensure that their products and services meet the required sustainable criteria, thus reducing negative impacts at the host destination. This approach helps keep the destination pristine and attractive, while encouraging tourists to visit and/or return. Thus, certification programs have the potential to improve the environmental and socio-cultural well-being of host communities in the longer term since they tend to push tourism businesses to maintain sustainable levels of performance (Johnson, 2002; Sasidharan, Sirakaya & Kerstetter, 2002; Rivera, 2004).

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

Despite the previously described advantages, certification programs are currently experiencing several challenges that hinder their overall implementation. For example, there are currently no widely-accepted guidelines or frameworks dictating how monitoring and auditing procedures should be performed. Due to this lack of regulation, monitoring tends to be conducted

on a voluntary basis in the majority of certification programs, raising suspicion amongst different tourism stakeholders regarding the credibility of these schemes. Consequently, tools that have the potential to improve the environmental and socio-cultural welfare of local communities are now being mistrusted and increasingly associated with ‘green-washing’ (Medina, 2005; Buckley, 2002; Johnson, 2002). Monitoring and auditing should hence become mandatory and externally managed to ensure that tourism companies are actually achieving what they are reporting (Sasidharan et al., 2002; Mycoo, 2006; Buckley, 2002). Moreover, the absence of international definitions for both ecotourism and sustainable tourism has led certification programs to use their own interpretation of what these concepts represent and how they should be measured. It therefore becomes difficult to apply criteria when there is no international agreement on how sustainability should be achieved. This lack of consistency has led to the proliferation of these schemes, all varying in scope, content and criteria, creating further confusion amongst consumers and other tourism stakeholders (Mycoo, 2006, Buckley, 2002).

Certification schemes are also facing complications with the existing criteria found in their programs. For example, it is often argued in the literature that these criteria might not reflect the needs and capabilities of developing nations since they are often established by developed countries and applied widely to all nations without considering their specific background. This situation is believed by several authors to further exacerbate the North and South divide, being perceived as another form of control by Western countries over developing nations (Buckley, 2002; Sasidharan et al., 2002; Mycoo, 2006; Font & Harris, 2004). Furthermore, the criteria found in certification programs are also inclined to have a strong environmental focus, tending to either not include or not require adherence to socio-cultural criteria. This situation is unfortunate and needs to be addressed without delay as tourism development does not only affect the local environment, but also the surrounding communities and their cultures. Medina (2005) attributes this lack of focus on socio-cultural criteria to the general belief that this type of criterion cannot be properly measured and/or interpreted. Moreover, tourism companies tend to believe that adopting socio-cultural practices can be less profitable than establishing sound environmental practices, potentially resulting in these ventures not adhering to the former. Therefore, this perceived lack of profitability has pushed certification schemes to down play socio-cultural criteria in their agendas (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004; Font & Sasidharan, 2001).

Several authors also attribute the tendency for socio-cultural criteria to be ignored by current certification programs to the fact that concepts such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism had a strong environmental focus in their origins (Bendell & Font, 2004; Font & Harris, 2004). However, these terms have since evolved and literature increasingly recognizes the existing relationship between environment, culture and community when aiming to safeguard host destinations (Font & Harris, 2004; Carrier & McLeod, 2005). In fact, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Two of this thesis, the definitions of ecotourism and sustainable tourism now include a more holistic approach to tourism development and embrace the necessity to not simply conserve the natural habitat, but also help protect local communities and their cultures (Lawton & Weaver, 2002; Medina, 2005; Mycoo, 2006). Moreover, since the end of the 1990s, Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) has emerged in the literature as a new approach to tourism development that aims to increase financial and social benefits to the less fortunate. Therefore, this thesis will argue that current certification schemes must evolve: they need to begin incorporating socio-cultural criteria into their programs, and if these criteria are already included, their mandatory adoption must be required before a company can obtain certification.

### **1.3 Research Goal, Purpose and Objectives**

It is interesting to note that only a small number of authors have examined the socio-cultural side of certification programs, and that even fewer studies have attempted to analyse the feasibility of measuring this type of criteria (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004; Font & Sasidharan, 2001). This scarcity of information is regrettable as socio-cultural standards are important components of ecotourism and sustainability. Thus, this research is intended to fill this gap by examining the importance and feasibility of adopting socio-cultural criteria in current certification programs. With this goal in mind, this study has the following objectives:

1. To explore how the culture, social factors, geography, and/or policies of a tourist destination can shape and influence certification programs and their overall practices.
2. To investigate the benefits that adhering to the environmental and socio-cultural criteria of a certification program can represent for the accommodation sector of a popular tourist destination.
3. To examine a certification program to have a better understanding of its current practices, and of the potential advantages and challenges it currently faces.



4. To provide potential recommendations for hotels on how to successfully implement both the environmental and socio-cultural criteria of certification programs.

To achieve the goal and objectives, this research examines the case of Green Globe, an international certification program that certifies hotels, tourism companies and even entire destinations. A qualitative approach is applied throughout the study since this technique helps provide an expanded understanding of socio-cultural criteria and their implication for certification programs, hotels and tourist destinations.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Certification programs are still in the early stages of their development and have a few challenges to overcome before they can attain their full potential. Therefore, these schemes seem to be at a turning point: either tourism stakeholders choose to simply focus on the pitfalls of certification programs and concede defeat; or the tourism sector continues to take action, attempting to improve the general process. Too often principles such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism are studied and analysed in the academic field, without necessarily being put into practice. As certification programs are an attempt to codify these key notions, I feel that it is necessary to continue conducting further research to enhance these schemes. Thus, this research ultimate goal is to address some of the current drawbacks identified in the literature by providing information to current certification programs on the importance of requiring tourism companies to adhere to socio-cultural criteria. It is also hoped that this study will provide both tourism stakeholders and certification programs with solutions and suggestions on how these criteria can be achieved and indicators implemented. It is through the development and design of reliable indicators for benchmarking both environmental and socio-cultural performances that long-term sustainability will be achieved in tourist destinations (Bohdanowicz, Simanic & Martinac, 2005)

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The following chapter provides a review of current literature regarding certification programs that will help provide the conceptual background on important themes related to these programs and that are necessary to properly understand their overall practices. The first theme of this chapter defines ecotourism and sustainable tourism, key terms used in certification programs, and discusses their evolution over the years. Such discussion is vital to gain proper insight on some of the challenges these programs are currently facing. The second theme offers a general background on the main institutions that shape certification programs. The third theme defines certification programs and discusses their overall development throughout the years. The fourth theme discusses the several challenges that certification programs are currently facing. This last point is important since it helps identify the obstacles that are stopping these programs from attaining their full potential. It is hoped that by bringing together literature on these different themes, the theoretical foundation needed to properly understand certification programs and their relationship with tourism development will be provided.

### **2.2 Definitions and Evolution of Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism**

With the increasing public consciousness regarding the importance of preserving our natural habitat, the term ecotourism has grown in popularity year after year since its origins in the 1980s. The establishment in 2002 of the ‘International Year of Ecotourism’ by the United Nations and the first publication of the *Journal of Ecotourism* in the same year further show the rising importance of ecotourism in our societies (Johnson, 2002). Although this term is currently widespread in the tourism sector, ecotourism tends to be a complex and rather contradictory concept, with no international definition having been adopted yet to delineate it. In fact, Fennell (2001) identified at least 85 definitions of the term ecotourism, all diverging in meaning and criteria from one another (as cited in Lawton & Weaver, 2007). This absence of international guidelines allows room for different interpretations, each tourism stakeholder adopting its own definition according to their personal understanding of what ecotourism should involve and how it should be managed. Thus, there is an urgent need to address this situation and adopt a global definition of ecotourism, since it can potentially affect the transparency of several tourism products and services.

Hector Ceballos-Lascurain popularized the term ecotourism in 1983, when he identified ecotourism as ‘a form of travel to which the natural environment is the primary focus, including travelling to unspoilt natural environments and predominantly for experiencing the natural environment’ (Neil & Wearing, 2009, p.6). As this definition demonstrates, ecotourism, during its early stages, had a strong connection with nature-based tourism. However, ecotourism has evolved since, now being more inclined to embrace socio-cultural and economic elements as part of its definition. In fact, when Fennell (2001) compared the 85 definitions that he had collected, he observed that social perspectives (such as local empowerment, ethics and education) were included in the more recent definitions, whereas before definitions tended to focus mainly on environmental issues (as cited in Lawton & Weaver, 2007). For instance, Blamey (1997, 2001) described how ecotourism products and services should be environmentally friendly, encourage learning and education amongst both the hosts and guests, and also promote socio-cultural and economic sustainability (as cited in Lawton & Weaver, 2007). This growing tendency to perceive socio-cultural practices as crucial elements in the definition of ecotourism can perhaps be attributed to the general realisation that ‘all supposedly ‘natural’ environments are directly, or at least indirectly, affected by human activity, so that ‘culture’ is therefore implicit and often explicit in all such venues and cannot be divorced from ‘nature’” (Lawton & Weaver, 2007, p.1170). Therefore, ecotourism proponents are increasingly trying to differentiate ecotourism from nature-based tourism. New definitions tend to look behind the entity itself and are now trying to examine how ecotourism firms can help conserve ecosystems while ensuring that local communities benefit from tourism (Medina, 2005). For the purposes of this thesis, the following comprehensive definition of ecotourism will be used,

Ecotourism is the travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strive to be low impact and (usually) small scale. It helps educate the traveller; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and human rights. (Honey, 2002, as cited in Medina, 2005, p. 283)

The evolution of the term ecotourism has an increasing connection with the concept of sustainability, as it seems to have become an essential feature of the former. McCool, Moisey & Nickerson (2001) explain that the ‘development of sustainable tourism in the 1990s represents a major paradigm shift in the role of the industry in economic and community development’ (p.124). Therefore, similarly to ecotourism, it is also important to consider the evolution of the

definition of sustainable tourism as it has changed since its origins, with no international consensus for this concept up until now. Butler (1991) defines sustainable tourism as ‘tourism which is developed and maintained in an area in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an infinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exists’ (as cited in Neil & Wearing, 2009, p.9). Bramwell and Lane (1993) have a similar perspective on sustainable tourism; however, these authors include to a higher extent the impacts that tourism development can have on local communities. Their definition states that,

Sustainable tourism is a positive approach intended to reduce the tensions and friction created by the complex interactions between the tourism industry, visitors, the environment and the communities which are hosts to holidaymakers. It is an approach, which involves working for the long-term viability and quality of both the natural and human resources. (Bramwell & Lane, 1993, as cited in Mycoo, 2006)

Lane (2001) uses a more participatory approach in his definition and explains that,

Sustainable tourism is a concept designed to manage the interests of all three parties involved – the host habitats and communities, the tourists, and the industry itself. It seeks a balance between development and conservation. This vision should be thought out with the people, not just for the people. (as cited in Mycoo, 2006, p.491)

Moreover, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) sees sustainable tourism ‘as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems’ (as cited in Mycoo, 2006, p. 491). This latter is the definition that will be used for purposes of this thesis since it includes the importance of protecting socio-cultural resources as well as the natural habitat. It is important to note that although the wording of the definitions for ecotourism and sustainable tourism that were chosen for this thesis differs, both definitions include environmental, economic, social and cultural components that are essential to sustainably develop tourism in host destinations.

Although current literature on certification programs does not seem to discuss Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) in relation to these programs, according to Font & Harris (2004), PPT helps reflect on the significance of sustainability in developing countries since ‘it addresses the key principles and needs at the economic, social, cultural, and environmental levels of developing

countries, and thus explicitly considers the triple bottom line of sustainability' (p.994). Therefore, the PPT model can help have a better understanding of the type of socio-cultural criteria that certification programs could potentially include in their agendas. The Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership (2005) defines PPT as 'tourism that results in increased net benefits for poor people'. This approach was started in the United Kingdom at the end of the 1990s and has been implemented since then by several aid and consulting agencies (Harrison, 2008). The PPT model has three types of benefits: 'economic benefits, other livelihood benefits (such as physical, social or cultural improvements), and less tangible benefits of participation and involvement' (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2005)<sup>1</sup>.

It is important to note that PPT is not a specific theory or model. In fact, it is often described in the literature as an orientation, 'an approach to tourism which seeks to bring a wide range of benefits to the poor, including social, environmental and cultural benefits in addition to economic benefits' (Scheyvens, 2007, p.232). Therefore, the PPT model tends to be a guiding principle for tourism development. This situation can also be applied to ecotourism and sustainable tourism since the current absence of international guidelines defining these terms has potentially led to these concepts to become 'guiding fiction'; in other words, 'precepts that cannot be proved or measured but that act to create a sense of community, connection and power: they provide a stimulus for important arenas of social discourse' (Shumway, 1991, as cited in McCool et al., 2001, p. 127). However, the lack of consensus regarding ecotourism and sustainable tourism can also have important consequences on the transparency and proper implementation of certification programs, since it becomes difficult to apply criteria and appropriate monitoring processes when there is no widely-accepted definitions on such key terms.

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<sup>1</sup> Some examples of this 'core' activities include: 'increase access of the poor to economic benefits (e.g. training, employment, supply linkages, information to tourists on community tourism ventures and the importance of buying local); to address the negative environmental and social impacts of tourism (e.g. loss of access to natural resources associated with creation of protected areas, social disruption); to reform policies and processes (e.g. to promote active participation of the poor in decision-making)' (Scheyvens, 2007, p. 235).

## **2.3 Organisations and Programs that Shape Certification Programs**

The literature mentions several organisations and programs that define and shape certification programs. However, there are three institutions that seem to have the highest influence in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes of certification schemes: the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Agenda 21 and ISO 14001. In the following section, these organisations and programs will be discussed in further detail.

### **2.3.1 The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)**

The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is ‘a specialized agency of the United Nations and is the leading international organization in the field of tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how’ (UNWTO, 2011). This organisation plays an important role in the promotion of responsible and sustainable development across the world. The UNWTO helps in the decision-making, promotion and implementation of important tourism policies, such as certification programs (UNWTO, 2011).

The UNWTO established the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) and encourages different tourism stakeholders, such as central and local governments, local communities, and the tourism sector and its professionals, to adopt this code in their current practices (UNWTO, 2011). The GCET is a ‘comprehensive set of ten principles whose purpose is to guide stakeholders in tourism development’ (Holcomb, Upchurch & Okumus, p.461). These standards are not legally bounding but provide guidelines to countries and businesses on how to achieve sustainable and responsible actions. In the context of certification programs, the GCET serves as a guiding principle when it comes to the creation and establishment of criteria found in these schemes.

### **2.3.2 Agenda 21**

Agenda 21 traces its roots back to the United Nations Earth Summit that took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. Approved by more than 180 countries, Agenda 21 is a comprehensive action plan that includes guiding principles for countries to work towards sustainable development (Sasidharan et al., 2002). This plan emphasizes the need for the UNWTO, governments and tourism businesses to conserve the environment, by establishing global, national and local policies and regulations that would protect the natural habitat from the

potential negative impacts of tourism development (UN Economic and Social Development, 2009). In its origins, Agenda 21 mainly focused on environmental issues and their connection with host communities (Sasidharan et al., 2002). Although this program is slowly including socio-cultural and economic issues amongst its principles, Agenda 21's focal point is still mainly environmental.

Green Globe was established following this Earth Summit and the establishment of Agenda 21. Green Globe is an international certification program that can certify hotels, spas, airlines and even entire destinations. This program is the first attempt to have a single and global certification program regulating different forms of tourism (Font & Harris, 2004). Furthermore, several other certification programs, such as Blue Flag and the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST), base their indicators and criteria on the principles found in Agenda 21.

### **2.3.3 ISO 14001**

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) developed ISO 14001 in order to 'enable an organization of any type or size to develop and implement a policy committing it to prevention of pollution, compliance with legal requirements, and continual improvement' (ISO, 2011). In other words, ISO 14001 is an environmental management system that can be applied to all types of organisations, no matter their geographical, cultural and social conditions (Font & Tribe, 2001). If the firm complies with the different criteria, an environmental verifier accredits it and the venture is granted accreditation ISO 14001. In 2008, more than 188,000 businesses were certified with this logo, which was a 70% increase compared to 2004 (ISO, 2011). In the context of certification programs, ISO 14001 partakes in the creation and implementation of environmental indicators and criteria.

After reviewing these different organisations and programs, it is also important to properly understand the definition and evolution of certification schemes. These explanations will help have a better understanding of the challenges that these programs are currently facing.

## **2.4 Definition and Evolution of Certification Programs**

Tourism figures continue to increase year after year, putting great pressure on several local communities that have become playgrounds for holidaymakers, especially in developing countries. These damages have been accelerated and their magnitude amplified by the arrival of

mass tourism to these popular locations. As Butler (1990) explains, these destinations often have fragile ecosystems that are being threatened by unplanned tourism development (as cited in Sasidharan et al., 2002). In many occasions, with the aim of satisfying the needs and desires of this sometimes unanticipated influx, rapid and unorganised tourism projects are being implemented, resulting in the further degradation of natural and socio-cultural resources that are essential to sustain tourism (Fleckenstein & Huebsch, 1999; Sasidharan et al., 2002). Thus, this situation has created high economic leakages amongst the hosts, damage to their local culture, social negative impacts, pollution issues and general damages to ecosystems and habitats. During the conference 'Sustainable Hotels for Sustainable Destinations' that occurred in Gran Canaria, Spain in 2000, the Director General of UNESCO stated,

Although tourism is an undeniable factor of economic development, it is also sometimes a threat to natural and cultural heritage because of the deterioration and even pillaging it inflicts. We should, therefore, find the means to achieve a common management of this heritage, harnessing the economical potential it entails to the best of our possibilities, while, at the same time, taking care of its integrity. (as cited in Jafari & Marin, 2002, p.268)

Since ecotourism and responsible tourism are currently relatively popular concepts amongst travellers, tourism businesses are increasingly being asked to achieve higher levels of environmental and socio-cultural responsibility towards host communities. To help in the promotion of these initiatives, ecotourism advocates believe that certification programs would help move this concept 'beyond conceptualisation to codification' and would help consumers 'distinguish genuine ecotourism from tourism greenwashing' (Medina, 2005, p. 284). Font & Harris (2004) further add that these schemes are an approach to operationalize sustainable tourism while improving the industry's performance. These supporters believe that the establishment of certification programs will prompt consumers to choose responsible goods and services over non-responsible ones. To respond to this demand for responsible products, tourism enterprises would feel pressure to implement green and sustainable practices and will potentially join certification programs with the intention of informing consumers of their performances.

In the market place, these schemes are considered important marketing strategies that can give companies a competitive advantage. For example, the Feasibility and Market Study for a European Ecolabel for Tourist Accommodations (FEMATOUR) produced a report based on surveys conducted amongst German tourists to evaluate if these consumers considered that hotels



should have responsibilities in the protection of the natural environment. Findings showed that a total of 73% of Germans were inclined to choose a hotel depending on its environmental performances (Giannelloni & Robinot, 2010).

Honey & Rome (2001) define certification as,

A voluntary procedure, which accesses, monitors, and gives written assurance that a business, product, process, service, or management system conforms to specific requirements. It awards a marketable logo or seal to those that meet or exceed baseline standards, that is, those which at a minimum comply with national and regional regulations, and typically fulfil other declared or negotiated standards prescribed by the certification programs. (as cited in Mycoo, 2006, p. 494)

Certification programs have developed exponentially since the early 1990s and there are currently over a hundred certification organizations that have been established (Medina, 2005). These schemes can range from regional to international scale, and can be developed by independent organisations, industry associations and governmental agencies (Buckley, 2002). Unfortunately, due to the lack of consistency discussed previously with regards to the definitions of ecotourism and sustainable tourism, certification programs tend to vary in content and criteria since each scheme operates under their own interpretation and vision of tourism development (Johnson, 2002). A few examples of current certification programs include: the National Ecotourism Accreditation program of Australia (NEAP), Blue Flag Label, Green Globe, and the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) and Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST).

Certification programs can assist the tourism sector to become more socially, culturally and environmentally responsible through the development of benchmarks and criteria for enterprises to achieve and perform properly. In fact, these schemes can encourage tourism firms to attain higher levels of environmental and socio-cultural performances, since before they can obtain certification, businesses have to adopt more sustainable modes of operation. Thanks to the certification's logo, tourism enterprises can then promote their performances to the public with the hope that the latter will choose their business over 'eco-insensitive' firms. Thus, when there is a proper monitoring process in place, certification schemes can push companies to maintain and constantly improve their performances throughout the years, helping reduce negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts in host communities (Sasidharan et al., 2002).

As described previously, certification programs are tools that can potentially help consumers and tourists distinguish legitimate ecotourism firms from ‘green washed’ ones (Johnson, 2002; Sasidharan et al., 2002). However, the propagation of these programs all varying in meaning and content has raised suspicion and mistrust amongst consumers and tourism stakeholders. Due to this situation, in 2000, twenty countries participated in the workshop ‘Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Certification’ where the Mohonk Agreement was drafted. This accord was an initial effort to control the proliferation of certification schemes and a first attempt to encourage these programs to include socio-cultural criteria in their agendas. The Mohonk Agreement encourages tourism firms to minimise negative socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts on host communities by ensuring respect of their rights. This document further stipulates that ‘certification schemes should be a participatory, multistakeholder, and multisectoral process that includes representatives from local communities, local businesses, nongovernmental organisations, community-based organisations, and government agencies’ (Medina, 2005, p. 285). However, how these socio-cultural and economic criteria should be measured or defined is not specified in the document leaving the concept to be very theoretical (Medina, 2005). Nevertheless, the Mohonk Agreement is a good first step in the inclusion of socio-cultural criteria in current certification programs.

#### **2.4.1 Important Terms in Certification Programs**

There are five terms that are important to define in order to properly understand certification programs and their overall practices: benchmarking, benchmarks, standards, criteria and indicators. Table 2.1 provides the different definitions of these terms that will be used in the context of this thesis:

**Table 2.1** *Definitions of Common Terms used in Certification Programs*

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Benchmarking	A reference of measurement standard for comparison. E.g. How many? How quickly? How satisfied? (Kozak, 2004, p.5)
Benchmark	Action discovering the specific practices responsible for high performance, understanding how these practices work and are achieved and adapting them to one's organization (Kozak, 2004, p.5)
Standards	The specification of aspects, elements of principles to which one should conform or by which quality is judged (Vlăsceanu, Grunberg & Parlea, 2004)
Criteria	Checkpoints or benchmarks by which the attainment of certain objectives and/or standards can be examined. Criteria describe in a certain degree of detail the characteristics of the requirement and conditions to be met (in order to meet a standard) and therefore provide the (qualitative or quantitative) basis on which an evaluative conclusion is drawn (Vlăsceanu, et al., 2004)
Indicators	The quantitative variables measured periodically that reflect the condition of socially and environmentally important issues. They also suggest the efficacy of particular actions designed to achieve attainment of specific goals (McCool et al., 2001, p. 124).

Certification programs use indicators as a proxy for the measurement of environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts that a tourism business can have on the host community. Indicators are central tools that allow the evaluation of a firm's accomplishments and improvements to attain sustainable criteria (Diamantis, 1999). For their successful application, indicators need to be reliable, measurable, relevant to sustainability, flexible and adaptable. Unfortunately, according to McCool et al., (2001), current indicators tend to be vague and intangible making them difficult to measure. Therefore, it is important for certification programs to include a clear description of what the indicator represents, the way they are going to be measured and finally, what is the required benchmark for each one of them (Mycoo, 2006).

Current criteria and indicators found in certification programs are largely based on Agenda 21 and on ISO 14001, which were discussed in section 2.2 (Mycoo, 2006; Green Globe Website, 2012). A year after the creation of Agenda 21, the UNWTO formed a commission that had the

task of developing international indicators that certification programs could use to measure sustainable performances. Interestingly enough, this task force avoided the issue of using an international definition of sustainable tourism deciding that ‘ultimately any definition was site or destination specific’ (Manning, 1999, as cited in McCool et al., 2001, p. 125). However, these types of attitude, and the current absence of consensual meaning amongst tourism stakeholders on what sustainability and ecotourism represents, are leading each organization to develop their own criteria and indicators according to their interpretation of these key terms. Therefore, McCool et al., (2001) argue that tourism industries, local people and management agencies need to arrive to a compromise and decide on how tourism development is supposed to achieve sustainability. This conceptualization would help identify appropriate criteria and performance indicators, and develop proper policies that would have higher chances of leading to sustainability.

#### **2.4.2 Certification Programs and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

There is a current business trend where consumers expect companies ‘to go beyond their profit-oriented activities and boost the wellbeing of the community, making the world a better place’ (Nicolau, 2008, p.990). In fact, Falck and Hebich (2007) argue that ‘if a company aims to survive and prosper, the best way is to take a long term view and understand that if treats the society well, society will return the favour’ (as cited in Nicolau, 2008, p.990). Thus, several companies are now increasingly aiming to practice socially responsible modes of operation, and striving to openly discuss and showcase these accomplishments (Njite, Hancer & Slevitch, 2011). In order to satisfy these ‘expected’ ethical responsibilities, several companies have decided to adopt corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs in their agendas. According to the World Bank (2007),

Corporate social responsibility is a term describing a company’s obligation to be accountable to all its stakeholders in all its operations and activities. Socially responsible companies consider the full scope of their impact on communities and the environment when making decisions, balancing the needs of stakeholders with their need to make a profit. (as cited in Nicolau, 2008)

In fact, several hotel chains have today CSR reports on their websites regarding their different social and environmental activities, including the Hilton Corporation, the Accor hotel group, and the InterContinental Hotels Group (Gan (2006) & Juholin (2004), as cited in Holcomb et al., 2007).

Henderson (2007) explains that CSR programs are particularly applicable to tourism businesses since environment, communities and local culture are the main components of the tourism product and thus, ‘companies have acute responsibilities towards the places they are selling at’ (as cited in Nicolau, 2008). Tilt (1997) further argues that ‘consumer oriented firms’, such as tourism businesses, tend to have greater adherence levels to CSR programs, since the social reputation of the latter can have important impacts on the company’s sales (as cited in Nicolau, 2008). However, despite the CSR perspective that tourism businesses feel the altruistic need to be socially responsible, the reality is perhaps a little different, several companies being inclined to become more responsible due to ‘increased economic benefits, public scrutiny, and improved investor relations’ (Gan (2006) & Juholin (2004), as cited in Holcomb et al., 2007).

It is also interesting to note that although CSR is an interesting approach taken by local businesses to adopt more sustainable modes of operation, this situation potentially puts the onus on the consumers to conduct their own research in order to compare products and decide which ones are more environmentally and/or socially responsible. Making these comparisons can be extremely time-consuming and tourists might not have the desire or the necessary expertise to evaluate the environmental and social performances of different goods and services (Johnson 2002; Mycoo 2006). Therefore, despite the increasing public awareness on the importance of preserving local habitats and communities, it is not a simple task for tourists to make informed decisions regarding which products or services choose. Therefore, certification schemes can help ‘define, compile, test, and summarize this information into a readily recognizable and easily comprehensible symbol’ (Buckley, 2002, p. 185). Consequently, contrary to CSR reports, consumers can refer to this symbol to make informed decisions and can use it to compare different products without having to do extensive research.

As explained in this section, certification programs can assist consumers to make informed decisions by helping them choose more sustainable tourism products and services. However, certification programs are currently facing several challenges that need to be understood and overcome in order for these schemes to become more reliable. The following section will discuss these challenges in further detail.

## **2.5 Current Challenges in Certification Programs**

Several tourism companies tend to use the term ecotourism as a marketing tool to draw more tourists who are willing to pay higher prices to receive what they think is an ecotourism experience (Johnson, 2002; Carrier & MacLeod, 2005). However, as Johnson (2002) explains,

Ecotourism experiences are often being greenwashed by superficial, feel-good rhetoric and minor cost-saving modifications that do not transform tourism into a tool that protects the environment and benefits local communities. Imagine booking a week at an eco-lodge that promotes sustainable energy use only to find out that their idea of 'sustainable' means turning the diesel generator off at 8:00 pm. (p. 28)

Although this statement seems radical, these cases take place on a regular basis. Therefore, certification programs are considered powerful tools that could help protect the tourists from this potential 'greenwashing'. However, these schemes are currently experiencing several challenges preventing them from accomplishing this important task.

### **2.5.1 Monitoring Process and Government's Role in Certification Programs**

One of the first challenges that certification programs are facing concerns their auditing and monitoring process. At the present moment, there is an absence of widely-accepted guidelines and frameworks regulating how monitoring and auditing processes should be conducted (Sasidharan et al., 2002). Due to this lack of international regulations, monitoring tends to be done on a voluntary basis<sup>2</sup> in the majority of certification programs, raising suspicion regarding the credibility of these schemes. Nevertheless, international recognised guidelines should become mandatory in order to verify that companies are actually achieving what they are reporting (Medina, 2005). To attain this goal, it is necessary for certification schemes to pre-determine threshold levels which will define the cut-off point of when impacts start being considered unacceptable. Rivera (2004) conducted a study to determine the correlation that exists between businesses participation to certification programs and pre-set performance thresholds. His findings demonstrated that compliance with certification criteria was higher when there were pre-established performance-based benchmarks and formal auditing in place to verify their accuracy. It is important to note that the designation of these benchmarks can be difficult and be

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<sup>2</sup> Due to a lack of international recognised regulations regarding monitoring practices, tourism companies can either decide to verify the accuracy of the information presented or not; or either choose their own monitoring process without necessarily hiring a third-party auditor to verify the reported information (Buckley, 2002; Medina, 2005)

a source of intensive debates; however, these points of reference are necessary to ensure that the monitoring process is as transparent and accurate as possible (Font & Tribe, 2001). Once these benchmarks are established, auditors can verify a company's performance against these 'fix' criteria. Furthermore, certification programs should conduct these auditing checks on a regular basis to ensure that businesses continuously operate at or above the pre-determined benchmark. This constant monitoring would require ventures to regularly account on their environmental and socio-cultural performances (Mycoo, 2006). It is also recommended that such reporting is conducted by an outside audit simply to ensure that the process is as transparent and neutral as possible (Mycoo, 2006).

In addition to having pre-set benchmarks and an independent and transparent audit, certification programs need to start giving penalties and sanctions to businesses that do not comply (Buckley, 2002; Rivera, 2004). In this case, Buckley (2002) believes that governments could start playing a more active role in the development and supervision of certification programs. This author explains that governments should help define the criteria found in each program, establish legislative standards that would help ensure the transparency of these schemes and apply sanctions to non-complying firms. It is interesting to note that some authors attribute the proliferation of certification programs to tourism stakeholders trying to avoid future government intervention since it would likely bring more rigid legislations and sanctions (Buckley, 2002; Bendell & Font, 2004; Medina, 2005). In fact, Buckley (2002) explains that private companies decide to join certification programs to prevent or delay government involvement that would impose more restrictive regulations. Therefore, mandatory legislations and the threat from government to apply penalties and sanctions if the companies do not comply could potentially be an effective method to ensure consistency and transparency in the different certification programs.

The same study conducted by Rivera (2004) also showed how institutional forces can encourage hotel facilities to partake in certification programs. He conducted surveys and face-to-face interviews amongst employees of 250 Costa Rican hotels to determine the correlation between hotel participation in certification schemes and institutional pressures. Findings showed that hotels located near parks that were experiencing higher government monitoring tended to have higher levels of participation to voluntary certification programs compared to beach hotels that were facing little to no supervision (Rivera, 2004). Therefore, these results show that

tourism ventures have higher levels of compliance with environmental and socio-cultural criteria when there are institutional regulations and governmental pressures in place supervising the tourism sector. Conversely, it is also important to mention that the media, consumers and other industry associations can also exert pressure on tourism ventures to comply with sustainable and responsible modes of operation.

Neo-institutional theory declares that ‘not all business choices are the result of manager’s rational economic decisions’ (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991; Scott 1995, as cited in Rivera 2004). This theory states that management decisions and practices are not solely induced by economic reasons, but that norms, values and traditions also have an influence on their operations as these give a sense of social legitimacy to tourism ventures (Rivera, 2004). Meyer and Rowan (1977) divide these types of pressures into two categories: coercive and normative (as cited in Rivera, 2004). Coercive pressures are often imposed by governments and businesses to push companies to comply in order to avoid penalties; normative pressures relate to the pressure that values and norms can exert on businesses which, afraid of portraying a bad public image, conform to the necessary standards (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, as cited in Rivera 2004, p. 784). According to this standpoint, even if a certification program does not have a third-party auditing program, social pressure and fear of public embarrassment would motivate these companies to perform in an environmentally and socio-culturally responsible manner (Rivera, 2004). Fleckenstein & Huebsch (1999) further sustain that ‘being ethical is good business since being ethical enhances a company’s profits management effectiveness, public image and employee relations’ (p.142). However, as explained in section 2.4.2, the reality might be a little different with tourism businesses also having important financial motivations to adopt socially and environmentally responsible modes of management and operation.

### **2.5.2 Donations as a Source of Revenue for Certification Programs**

Donations from independent foundations and from governmental agencies are a main source of revenue for most certification programs (Skinner, Font, & Sanabria, 2004). This money can help these schemes research, advertise their organization, and develop new indicators and monitoring processes. However, since some of these donations come from private tourism enterprises, Sasidharan et al. (2002) explain that the identification of ‘environmental impacts and the development of criteria around them can be strongly influenced by the preferences of the



stakeholders that have vested interests in the program' (p. 167). Thus, the agendas of certification programs can be shaped in order to reflect the donor's priorities. For example, Green Globe is mostly financed by tourism industry trade associations and other important players (such as hotel chains) who believe that customers are more influenced by environmental rather than social initiatives. Therefore, this program is inclined to concentrate more on environmental issues because their private donors might not be as generous if Green Globe had a stronger focus on social issues (Sasidharan et al., 2002; Green Globe Brochure, 2011). Similar to Green Globe, ISO 14001 also receives donations from the private sector. Due to this situation, this organisation tends to certify firms even if they are in 'legal dispute or in conflict with environmentalists and local communities of the tourist destination' (Honey & Rome, 2000, as cited in Sasidharan et al., 2002, p. 167). Alternatively, according to Font & Harris (2004), the CST, being a government-funded certification program, focuses on both the environment and the socio-cultural issues since it does not have pressure from private donors.

### **2.5.3 The Generalized Nature of Current Certification Programs**

Another challenge that certification programs are currently experiencing concerns the criteria found in these schemes. These criteria tend to be generalized to countries worldwide and are not inclined to take into consideration that 'specific environmental concerns and priorities may differ considerably among countries and socioeconomic groups' (Buckley, 2002, p.185). Buckley (2002) argues that although a country-by-country approach would be desired to ensure that criteria and benchmarks are customized to host communities, this tactic would potentially lead to a larger and overlapping number of schemes in each destination. Conversely, Epler, Wood & Halpenny (2001) consider that 'it is difficult to imagine how an international certification program could appropriately set standards for the ecotourism world, given the number of local concerns' (as cited in Medina, 2005, p. 286). Therefore, these authors argue that national and regional programs would have higher chances of producing more concrete and measurable criteria and benchmarks, sensitive to each destination's needs and capacities. Then again, Buckley (2002) argues that a single global certification program has the advantage of being easily recognizable amongst consumers instead of having different schemes varying in mean and content. Nevertheless, an international program would require having national sub-branches that would be customized to the needs of each country. Rather than trying to impose a universal model on every country, this customization is essential to ensure that the appropriate

environmental and socio-cultural practices are implemented according to each region's needs and capacities.

There is also a growing concern that smaller tourism ventures in developing countries might not be well-equipped to conform to the criteria asked by certification programs (Honey & Rome, 2000, as cited in Sasidharan et al., 2002). In fact, current criteria tend to be defined by the North and are often imposed to the South without considering the conditions and capabilities of the host destination (Mycoo, 2006). According to several critiques, this situation exacerbates the inequalities between the North and the South, since certification programs are being perceived as another form of protectionist control of the North over the South (Font & Harris, 2004; Medina, 2005; Mycoo, 2006). During an interview conducted by Font & Harris (2004), a Green Globe official explained that it is arrogant to impose Western values on how to achieve sustainable tourism in developing countries as 'we cannot be all things to all men [...]. It is very dangerous to try to impose the Western way of life and lifestyle values to everyone' (p.998). Conversely, criteria found in certification programs are likely to be too low for larger scale firms that have the monetary power to achieve higher levels of performance, but too high for smaller enterprises in developing countries that do not have the financial resources to meet the required criteria (Font & Harris, 2004). Furthermore, the costs of joining certification programs can be extremely high, leading to an underrepresentation of smaller firms in the certification process (Sasidharan et al., 2002). For example, a study conducted by the Pacific Institute showed that joining the ISO 14 001 program can cost between 500\$ to 15,000\$ (Honey & Rome, 2000, as cited in Sasidharan et al., 2002). These fees are likely to restrict smaller tourism companies from joining the program as they might not have the financial capacity to afford it. Under such conditions, Font & Sasidharan (2001) believe that larger companies would have a competitive marketing advantage over smaller enterprises since these latter, not being able to afford the ecolabel showing their sustainable performances, would 'be portrayed as eco-insensitive in the eyes of Western tourists' (p.110). On the other hand, it is important to note that this perception could potentially be counterbalanced by tourists perceiving smaller hotels to be more sustainable compare to larger establishments.

#### **2.5.4 Lack of Socio-Cultural Indicators in Current Certification Programs**

It is also important to note that current certification programs tend to put higher emphasis on the environmental aspects of sustainability, reflecting the priorities and definitions of the 1980s-90s (Bendell & Font, 2004; Font & Harris, 2004; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005; Ayuso, 2007). Font & Harris (2004) attribute this situation to most of these programs being based in Europe, where environment is a high priority in the agenda of the different tourism stakeholders. Conversely, social criteria have so far mostly been included in certification programs established in developing countries such as in the CST (Font & Harris, 2004). However, literature is slowly realizing that social criteria need to be part of certification programs in order to fully embrace the meaning of ecotourism and sustainability (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004; Font & Sasidharan, 2001; Carrier & MacLeod, 2005). Moreover, socio-cultural criteria are as crucial as conserving a destination's natural habitat, since tourism ventures could potentially damage the social and cultural identity of host communities, disturb their traditional lifestyle and generally affect the quality of life of their population (Carrier & MacLeod, 2005). In fact, tourism projects and developments can potentially dislocate local populations when creating and developing ecotourist destinations like parks and reserves (Carrier & MacLeod, 2005). This situation shows the relationship that exists between the socio-cultural well-being of local communities and their natural surroundings. The main question now is turning social and cultural issues into measurable and meaningful metrics.

For the purposes of this thesis, socio-cultural criteria will encompass 'the broader range of social, cultural and economic issues of benefit to the local community that are usually interlinked' (Font & Harris, 2004, p. 987). Unfortunately, the metrics for socio-cultural issues are not as well established compared to environmental ones, since the former can be ambiguous and difficult to quantify (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004). Wober (2002) further explains that once these social criteria are measured, the results become a matter of interpretation (as cited in Font & Harris, 2004, p. 991). Therefore, this situation raises the concern of the auditor's objectivity since it involves a 'human assessing something for someone with a particular goal in mind' (Font & Harris, 2004, p. 989). Moreover, it is important to note that not many examiners have social auditing experience, with most of them currently specializing in auditing quality control, health standards and environmental performances. Therefore, it is necessary to either

provide adequate training in this area or hire auditors with socio-cultural skills in order for social criteria and its indicators to be properly measured and interpreted (Font & Harris, 2004).

Tepelus & Cordoba (2005) discuss that one the main reasons why tourism businesses tend to focus on implementing environmental modes of operation is due to the perceived potential cost savings of these green practices. These authors further explain how businesses tend to have difficulty putting ‘a price on the cultural experience the tourist will have when interacting with the local society’ or realizing the ‘immediate financial benefits to be obtained from engaging in dialogue with the local community’ (Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005, p. 139). Therefore, socio-cultural practices tend to be perceived by tourism firms to not provide nearly as much instant savings and profits compared to the implementation of environmental practices and thus, the former tend to be put aside by both certification programs and tourism businesses (Font & Sasidharan, 2001; Sasidharan & al., 2002; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005). However, tourism companies need to understand that an increased number of tourists are looking for more than ‘sun, sea and sand’ formulas, ‘moving away from passive sun lust to reasons such as education, curiosity and desire to understand other cultures’ (Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005, p. 139). Once tourism businesses start recognizing the marketing advantages that socio-cultural practices can represent, Tepelus & Cordoba (2005) believe that socio-cultural criteria will become more present in current certification programs.

It is important to mention that there are success stories demonstrating that certification schemes can successfully integrate social criteria and indicators in their requirements, such as the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST). Developed in 1997, the CST is a voluntary, not-for-profit and government-funded certification program established in Costa Rica to address the concern of the recent increase of tourism to this destination since it was impacting the community and its environment. This program is one of the first ‘third-party performance-based certification program’ to have been implemented in a developing country (Rivera, 2004) and is ‘designed to differentiate businesses of the tourism sector, based on the degree to which they comply with a sustainable model of natural, cultural and social resource management’ (Certification for Sustainable Tourism, 2010). In fact, it is one of the first certification programs to successfully include socio-economic and cultural criteria in their requirements before a tourism company can achieve certification (Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005).

The CST states that socio-cultural criteria ‘must be part of any certification program (...) particularly for certification of accommodation facilities, which have an immediate impact on local surroundings’ (as cited in Font & Harris, 2004, p. 1001). In fact, this program is an interesting case as it has managed to include social and cultural criteria in its program and still attract a large variety of ventures. In 2002, almost 200 hotels were participating in this scheme and there were even discussions regarding the possibility of implementing a similar program in other areas of Central America (Font & Harris, 2004; Rivera, 2004; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005). Moreover, the CST has a third-party audit that assesses hotel performance every two years in four different areas: ‘physical-biological parameters, infrastructure and services, service management and, socio-economic and cultural environment’ (CST, 2010). Then, the CST ranks each tourism venture in one of the six different categories (zero to five leaves) depending on the level of performance of their achievements (CST, 2010). With the CST, government support is essential in its success since its monitoring process is closely overseen by the Ministry of Tourism and local environmental organisations (Rivera, 2004).

## **2.6 Summary**

Certification programs are interesting tools to help codify important notions such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism, while helping reduce negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts on host destinations. However, as explained in this chapter, these schemes still have several challenges to overcome before they can attain their full potential. This thesis aims to work on one of these challenges by evaluating the importance and feasibility of adopting socio-cultural criteria in current certification programs. Although their measurement is still imperfect and these practices tend to be perceived as non-profitable to tourism companies, socio-cultural criteria need to become part of the required criteria of certification programs so as to fully embrace sustainability and ecotourism. This approach is necessary since even if certification programs are able to overcome most of the other challenges, if socio-cultural criteria do not become part of the requirements to achieve certification, concepts such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism cannot be properly achieved.

### **3.0 Research Methods**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As described in the previous chapter, certification programs can be used as powerful tools to help conserve natural resources while improving the general well-being of local communities and protecting their culture. However, the number of challenges that these programs currently face are preventing them from achieving their full potential. Most studies are inclined to analyse certification programs from an environmental perspective, reflecting the past tendency for concepts such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism to focus on natural resources. However, as the evolution of these definitions suggest, socio-cultural criteria are also essential components to achieve sustainability. Thus, this research aims to focus on the socio-cultural side of certification programs in order to understand how the current absence of these criteria and their lack of implementation prevent these schemes from properly achieving sustainable tourism in host destinations.

For the purposes of this thesis, I decided to choose Green Globe, an international certification program, as a case study, and research was conducted in Barbados. A total of 44 semi-structured interviews were conducted during my field work, including with hotel employees of Green Globe certified hotels, community members and tourism professionals who were either directly or indirectly in charge of promoting tourism on the island. Moreover, observation and analysis of secondary sources were also performed to corroborate the evidence collected throughout the interviews. The following section will describe in detail the research approach, the data collection and data analysis techniques that I used to attain the goal and objectives of this study.

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

To have an expanded understanding of the importance and feasibility of adopting socio-cultural criteria in certification programs, I decided for the purposes of this research to use a qualitative approach. An explanatory lens was further applied to help pinpoint the ‘forces causing the phenomenon in question and identify the plausible casual networks shaping the phenomenon’ (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.78). It is believed that this explanatory approach will help uncover any principles, attitudes and/or policies that are preventing certification programs from embracing socio cultural criteria.

Several studies have been conducted on certification programs. However, these studies are inclined to focus on the evolution of these schemes and the challenges they face when implementing environmentally-focused criteria (Bendell & Font, 2004; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005; Font & Sasidharan, 2001, Mycoo, 2006). Only a handful have considered looking at how external factors, such as culture, societal values, history and government support, can affect the implementation process of certification programs (Rivera, 2004; Font & Harris, 2004). Thus, a qualitative approach helps explore where and why policy and practice sometimes does not apply, while uncovering ‘informal and unstructured linkages and processes in organisations’ and/or destinations that might affect certification programs (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 46). In other words, I intend to properly understand the ‘complex interactions, tacit processes, and often hidden beliefs and values’ that can play a major role in the establishment and practice of certification programs (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 14). In fact, I believe that it is not just a matter of stating that hotels do not meet the necessary requirements, but that it is necessary to look at why this is happening and how it is affecting the whole process.

Creswell (2009) explains that researchers that decide to engage in qualitative methods tend to support research that honours an inductive style; seeks to establish the participant’s perspective on the meaning of a phenomenon and; acknowledges the importance of presenting the complexity of the situation under study. In fact, a social constructivists’ worldview has further influenced this study as ‘humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). In fact, I consider that the proper understanding of certification programs and their different processes are strongly linked with the political, social and cultural context of the destination and its local population. As Schein (1985) explains, ‘we simply cannot understand organizational phenomena without considering culture both as a cause and as a way of explaining such phenomena’ (as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 47). In other words, it is not possible to separate the data and its analysis from its context.

Throughout this research, I attempted to stay as neutral and objective as possible. However, as Creswell (2009) explains, the researcher’s personal experiences can affect the selection of research design. In the context of this research, I am a married female in my late twenties. Although born in Quebec City, I had the chance to grow up in Cancun, Mexico. Thus, the fact that I spent 14 years of my childhood in a popular tourist destination has influenced the way I

perceive tourism and its development. Throughout this thesis, with the aim of being as objective and transparent as possible, concrete examples will be provided demonstrating how my personal experiences have potentially influenced my research methods, sampling choices and the analysis of the data collected.

### **3.3 Selection of Case Study**

Case studies are an important technique in qualitative research as they can provide a better and deeper understanding of issues that surround the problem under study (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; UWE Flick, 2007). Although some of the information presented in this research cannot be universally applied, Ragin (1987) believes that choosing a case study can help gather in-depth information and ‘capture the complexity of the case while still attempting to produce some level of generalization’ (p.145). Thus, for the purposes of this study, I decided to take a closer look at Green Globe, an international certification program. Certification programs such as Green Globe tend to not only affect the tourism sector, but also other industries that are involved either directly or indirectly in producing the tourism product, such as agriculture and transportation. Therefore, by using Green Globe as a case study, I not only hope to expand my knowledge on certification programs but also uncover other issues that ultimately affect and shape these schemes.

Green Globe certifies different organisations, from hotels and airlines, to entire destinations (Green Globe Website, 2012). Due to this broad selection, I decided to focus my analysis on the accommodation sector of a popular tourist destination as ‘this industry generates a great portion of resource consumption and is one of tourist’s basic expectations when travelling’ (Jafari & Marin, 2002, p. 267). Furthermore, Giannelloni and Robinot (2010) explain that ‘the environmental impacts of hotel facilities are often greater than those caused by other types of buildings of similar size’ since they tend to be located in fragile and contested spaces such as beachfronts and sanctuaries (p. 157). These previous authors attribute this situation to the special function that hotels play in tourism: considered short-stay homes for tourists, the latter tend to consume more than ordinary levels of water and waste since they considered themselves ‘on vacation’. However, although the passage of tourists is temporary, the environmental and social repercussions on host communities are permanent (Jafari & Marin, 2002). Therefore, hoteliers



have important responsibilities towards host communities as sustainable hotels can help build healthier destinations.

Qualitative studies also tend to entail conducting research in the natural setting of the selected topic (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; UWE Flick, 2007). Marshall & Rossman (1989) argue that ‘immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do’ (p. 79). Thus, to have further insight on Green Globe and its practices, I undertook field work in Barbados since this island is the country with the second most Green Globe certified hotels, offering a total of ten certified establishments. Although Germany was the country with the most certified hotels, I wanted to examine how certification programs applied to the case of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). Therefore, I spent a total of two months in Barbados during the months of May and June 2011. Field work was very important for this study since it helped build a richer and more detailed understanding of tourism in Barbados and how the different indicators found in Green Globe can relate to the island’s tourism product. The next two sub-sections will provide a general description of the certified hotels and their location on the island of Barbados.

### **3.3.1 Green Globe Certified Hotels**

As explained previously, I decided that field work for this study would be conducted on the island of Barbados, the most easterly country in the chain of Caribbean islands. Barbados is divided into three main tourist areas: the South Coast (also referred as the Gold Coast), the West Coast (or the Platinum Coast) and the East Coast. After doing a mapping exercise, I realized that nine of the ten hotels were located on the south-west section of the island, commonly referred as the South Coast, with only one property located on the East Coast. Therefore, due to the concentration of hotels on the South Coast, I decided to live in this area during my stay. The hotels on the South Coast were located between the fishing village of Oistins and the capital of the island, Bridgetown.

**Figure 3.1:** *Map of Barbados*



**Source:** World Atlas, 2012

It is often argued in the literature that different sizes of hotels have different capacities to comply with performance indicators (Jafari & Marin, 2002; Charara, Cashman, Bonnell & Gehr, 2011). Thus, the ten certified hotels were divided into three categories based on their size: small scale (under 30 rooms), medium scale (30-60 rooms) and large scale (over 60 rooms).

Table 3.1 provides the approximate location of each certified hotel divided per size category. It is important to note that the name of the hotels have been modified to protect the confidentiality of each property. Furthermore, Table 3.1 does not provide the exact location of each establishment simply to further ensure that these hotels are not recognized by readers that have travelled to Barbados before.

**Table 3.1** *Green Globe Certified Hotels in Barbados*

<b>Name of Hotel*</b>	<b>Location***</b>
Small Scale	
The Easterly	East Coast
Aunt May's Inn	South Coast
Medium Scale	
Blue Reef Hotel	South Coast
South Coast Hotel	South Coast
Sunny Beach Hotel	South Coast
The Red Mahogany	South Coast
Large Scale	
Barbados Resort	South Coast
Caribbean Sunshine	South Coast
The Green Monkey	South Coast
The Blue Flying Fish	South Coast

\*Name of hotel has been changed to protect the privacy of the establishments.

\*\*An approximate location has been provided to further ensure confidentiality.

Before leaving for Barbados, I intended to concentrate my field work on two communities of the South Coast: Hastings and St Lawrence Gap (also referred as 'The Gap') (see Figure 3.1). These communities were chosen since they have several certified hotels located in their vicinities. However, upon arrival at the destination, I realized how small the island truly was and how little to no demarcation existed between each community. Therefore, I had to modify the original plan, expanding the scope of the study to the rest of the South Coast: from Oistins, a small fishing village in the south-western part of the island, to Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados. Other communities located along this stretch and also under study included: The Gap, Hastings, Worthing and the Historic Garrison Area (which became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011) (UNESCO, 2011).

### **3.4 Historical Analysis**

Marshall & Rossman (1989) describe historical analysis as a ‘method of discovering, from records and accounts, what happened in the past. Historical analysis is particularly useful in qualitative studies for establishing a baseline or background prior to participant observation or interviewing’ (p.95). In the case of this study, I felt that this approach particularly applied to the island of Barbados, a country with a strong British colonial legacy and whose history was shaped by sugar cane plantations and complex race relations. Thus, throughout this thesis, I tried to relate my research design and data analysis to the historical background of the island. According to Cukier (1996), historical evidence can help connect the ‘colonial’ history of a country to the present reality, while at the same time having a better comprehension of a destination’s tourism development with its potential future trends.

Historical analysis can also help discover and understand some of the cultural nuances of the community under study. On the other hand, since this approach often involves the evaluation of the statement of others, it is important for the researcher to not attempt to impose his/her modern views and opinions on information of another era. In fact, historical analysis can easily be opened to misinterpretations due to cultural differences, depending highly on the honesty of the archives. Thus, it is important to consider the possibility that the information might have been falsified and potentially subject to incorrect interpretations on the part of the recorder (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In the end, it is up to the researcher to ensure the accuracy of the information collected by being as resourceful, methodical and transparent as possible throughout the process.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

According to Marshall & Rossman (1989), interviews and participant observation are two important techniques for data collection in qualitative research. Thus, I decided to use these two participatory techniques during this study, combining a third method for triangulation purposes: analysis of secondary sources. A total of three sample groups were chosen for data gathering: the employees of ten Green Globe certified hotels; tourism professionals, such as non-for-profit organisations and governmental agencies; and community members from the South Coast of Barbados. This section will not only examine the sampling approach used to select these participants, but will also describe in further detail the three data collection techniques of this study. Both the strengths and weaknesses of these methods will also be evaluated since it is

important to consider these details when collecting and analysing data. In fact, this information will allow me to use each technique's strengths to compensate for the other techniques' weaknesses, maximizing in return the validity and transparency of the qualitative data (UWE Flick, 2007).

### **3.5.1 Sampling Method and Respondent Groups**

As explained previously, my original plan involved conducting research with ten Green Globe certified hotels and with community members from The Gap and Hastings. However, once arrived on the island, the reality was a little different and certain plans had to be modified. According to Denzin (1970), 'no investigation should be viewed in a static fashion' (as cited in UWE Flick, 2007, p. 44). In other words, it is important for the researcher to be flexible and adaptable, since actions in the field can lead to new definitions, strategies and sometimes obstacles, pushing for the constant tuning of the initial research design. In the case of this study, I had to adapt to different unexpected situations; not only did I have to expand the research location but also slightly modify my respondent groups. The following sub-sections will explain in further detail the reasoning behind both of these changes.

#### **3.5.1.1 Hotels**

In the initial research design, I intended to interview both managers and employees of Green Globe certified hotels in order to acquire different perspectives on tourism development, Green Globe and its practices. Therefore, to achieve this objective, hoteliers from the ten certified hotels were first contacted via phone, with a short follow-up e-mail, and meetings were scheduled at the convenience of the hotel managers and/or directors. Certain hoteliers, such as the respondent for The Easterly hotel, had to be contacted several times before being able to communicate with the person in charge. In the end, a total of seven hotels agreed to participate in the study. The three other establishments, Aunt May's Inn, The Caribbean Sunshine and The South Coast Hotel, either never responded to my request or were simply unavailable to meet due to their busy schedules.

My expectations were that during the first meetings with the certified hotels, the managers and/or directors would be interested in letting me interview other employees. However, I soon realized that management was reluctant to allow this: as it was low season, several hotels were operating with very few staff and thus, managers did not consider that employees had time to

participate in the study; moreover, the hotel's personnel appeared to be rather occupied preparing for the upcoming season and certification inspections, having once again no time to meet. Due to these circumstances, I was only able to interview the hotel managers, directors and/or environmental officers<sup>3</sup> of the certified hotels, and a total of eight interviews were conducted.

#### **3.5.1.2 Community Members**

A Participatory Research Action (PRA) lens was used throughout the data collection process as I believe that the voices of the local residents need to be taken into account to properly understand how current criteria found in Green Globe are impacting these communities. At first, I intended to conduct surveys with 50 community members in both The Gap and Hastings. However, after arriving on the island, I soon realized that surveys were not culturally appropriate and that local people did not appear to respond positively to them. Thus, I had to change my methods from surveys to semi-structured interviews. Additional details on this change will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Since interviews tend to be rather time consuming, the sample number had to be reduced and in the end, a total of 25 community members were interviewed. The snowball sampling technique was used to choose the respondents, and interviews were conducted with individuals from different professional backgrounds, from beach vendors to electricians. This random selection allowed for the collection of different opinions on tourism development, including individuals that were not directly involved in the tourism sector. The interviews were conducted at the beach, local open markets, the boardwalk located in the South Coast and the Bridgetown Public Library.

#### **3.5.1.3 Tourism Professionals**

I had not originally planned on interviewing tourism professionals involved in the promotion and development of Barbados' tourism product. However, when I realized that fewer community member respondents than expected appeared to be interested in participating in the study, I decided to contact potential informants from government ministries, tourism associations and non-governmental organisations. In fact, I recognized in the field that these interviews would give further insight on Green Globe and its implications on the island.

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<sup>3</sup> Dedicated individuals responsible for the certification process at the hotel.

Once I had a better idea of the different organisations involved in Barbadian tourism and a greater understanding of how they were all interconnected, I started contacting (via email) individuals whose position and knowledge would help collect more information on the topic. Furthermore, I was able to make several contacts during my stay which allowed me to obtain meetings with tourism professionals from non-for-profit organisations and governmental agencies. In the end, a total of ten tourism professionals accepted my invitation to be interviewed.

### **3.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Before arriving to Barbados, my plan involved distributing surveys to both hotel employees and community members of the South Coast. Surveys were chosen since I hoped that this technique would help collect large amounts of information in a fast manner. Moreover, I considered that surveys could provide counterbalancing quantitative information regarding the levels of compliance of hotels to the diverse indicators found in Green Globe. However, upon arrival at the destination, I quickly realized that Barbadians tended to respond more positively to conversations and were more inclined to participate in the study if I took the time to sit down and discuss the different questions. Therefore, during the early stages of my field work, I modified my research design and decided to conduct semi-structured interviews since this technique seemed to be a more culturally appropriate way of collecting information. Moreover, having been raised in Mexico, a country where preambles and conversations are essential components of the local culture, I felt more comfortable sitting down and chatting with the respondents rather than simply waiting for them to complete the survey. I also felt that semi-structured interviews were a more reciprocal method of data collection, since I was not only obtaining the needed information, but was also allowing the participants to share their stories. In the end, I was able to conduct a total of 44 semi-structured interviews with the three different sample groups previously described.

According to Marshall & Rossman (1989), semi-structured interviews are ‘a method of data collection that may be described as an interaction involving the interviewer and the interviewee, the purpose of which is to obtain valid and reliable information’ (p. 82). This technique has several advantages including the opportunity to collect large amounts of information while also allowing the researcher to ask follow-up and/or clarification questions during the meetings.

Furthermore, in the case of this study, semi-structured interviews allowed me to identify the hidden and often intricate interconnections that exist between locals, tourism stakeholders and the Barbadian government. In fact, due to Barbados' complicated history of slavery, semi-structured interviews allowed for the identification of sensitive topics that helped clarify and better understand certain local attitudes and behaviours. For example, a respondent explained during an interview how certain locals perceive tourism to be a '*servitude* industry instead of a *service-oriented sector*' leading them to sometimes be unpleasant towards tourists (Respondent 4, emphasis added). Therefore, semi-structured interviews allowed me to collect information on the historical, socio-cultural and political background of Barbados, essential components to properly understand how Green Globe and its different indicators apply to the island.

On the other hand, semi-structured interviews also have several weaknesses and limitations that are important to acknowledge for transparency purposes. For example, although an enormous volume of information can be obtained through this process, the answers given by the interviewees tend to be filtered through their views, values and beliefs and thus, the information collected becomes highly dependent on their honesty and accuracy (Creswell, 2009). This situation was especially noticeable amongst the hotel employees that participated in the study since their answers had a high tendency to portray the hotel on a positive note, avoiding the discussion of more negative details. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that at certain times, my presence might have influenced the participants' responses, with a few respondents not interested in sharing certain information with me. The wording that I used to ask my questions might have also led to potential misinterpretation from the part of the respondents. From a researcher's perspective, data can be open to misinterpretation from his or her part due to his or her cultural and personal background. Therefore, this information strongly depends on the researcher's resourcefulness and honesty to control bias and report information as accurately as possible (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). These challenges can particularly emerge when field work takes place in another country since the researcher might not be as familiar with the local culture. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I always strived to be as objective and transparent as possible throughout the process.

It is also important to mention that these interviews were not audio recorded. In fact, I felt that a recording device would make people uncomfortable during the meetings, potentially pushing participants to censor their responses through fear of being recorded. Instead, I took large amount



of notes during the interviews, transcribing all the details in my computer as soon as the meeting was over. I acknowledge that this method might have introduced some bias to the notes since, to a certain extent, they are subject to my memory. Moreover, I cannot always guarantee that the precise terminology employed by the participants was used during the study. However, key words and important direct quotations were noted during the semi-structured interviews to show as much respect as possible to the voice of the respondents.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) also argue that it is important to give back to the respondents as they are donating of their time to accommodate the author. These authors further explain,

Where people adjust their priorities and routines to help the researcher, or even just tolerate the researcher's presence, they are giving of themselves. The researcher is indebted and should devise ways to give time, feedback, attention or some other appropriate gift. (Marshall & Rossman, 1989. p. 69)

Thus, I decided to give mangos to the participants as a token of appreciation. In fact, it is a local Barbadian that suggested this idea since he explained how other type of presents could potentially been perceived as 'charity' from the part of a 'foreigner' to 'a black local' (Community member 22). Therefore, I regularly bought mangos from a local farmer and gave one to each of the interviewees to thank them for their time.

### **3.5.2.1 Selection of Questions and/or Indicators**

Before starting the interview process, I prepared a number of open-ended questions for each of the three respondent groups: tourism professionals, hotel employees and community members. These pre-established questions were intended to be a starting and guiding point during the meetings, adding or removing questions depending on the circumstances. In fact, in several occasions, the respondents had limited time for the interviews and thus, I had to carefully choose the questions I wanted to ask. Therefore, I was not able to ask each interviewee all my questions. Since the principal focus of this thesis is Green Globe, I estimated that analysing the participant's views on ecotourism and sustainable tourism was an interesting source of additional information, without necessarily being capital to achieve the goals of this thesis (refer to Appendix B, C and D for questionnaire samples). On the other hand, all interviewees were asked about their views on the responsibility of hotels towards the protection of the environment and the socio-cultural well-being of local communities. Moreover, the participants were also asked to provide their

perception of Green Globe, and the benefits or challenges of this certification program (see Appendix B and D for further reference).

I had a separate set of questions for the semi-structured interviews with the hotel employees. A total of 24 criteria were chosen from the four Green Globe categories -sustainable management, environmental, socio-economic and cultural- and were discussed with the interviewees (see Appendix C for more details). These questions aimed to determine which criteria were hotels implementing and how, potentially identifying any challenges that hotel employees have faced during this process. The selection of these 24 criteria was based on current literature on certification programs, sustainable tourism, ecotourism and the PPT model. They were chosen since I felt they tended to encompass the important environmental, social and cultural principles necessary to achieve sustainability.

It is important to mention that I also had an additional question for both the tourism professionals and the community members (see Appendix B and D for further reference). The respondents were asked to provide three societal concerns that they thought were occurring on the island and that needed to be addressed by the government or other stakeholders. They were provided with a list of societal concerns that I compiled from literature<sup>4</sup>, with the option of providing other concerns if desired. To my surprise, this question tended to be rather sensitive since certain respondents thought that I was trying to tarnish the image of the island. Several participants even became a little aggressive with comments such as ‘we are a developed island’ (Community member 12) or ‘I am not saying that we are a poor country at all’ (Community member 23). To reassure the interviewees, I would explain how environmental, social and cultural issues also occur in Canada. Providing concrete examples of the Canadian context tended to relax the respondents, making them more open to share their concerns with me.

Semi-structured interviews played a major role in the collection of the information presented in this thesis. Although such interviews have several limitations, it also allowed the gathering of a large amount of insightful information that will help understand the importance and feasibility of adopting socio-cultural criteria in certification programs. As explained previously, to corroborate the information provided by the interviewees, I also conducted daily observation and

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<sup>4</sup> Based on literature on the PPT model and sustainable tourism.

analysed different secondary sources. The next two sections will discuss in further detail these two other qualitative methods.

### **3.5.3 Observation**

Observation is another important technique used to collect information for qualitative research. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), observation implies the ‘systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study. Through observation, the researcher learns about behaviours and the meanings attached to those behaviours’ (p.79). In the case of this research, observation helped uncover some of the nuances of the Barbadian culture that shape the tourism product on the island. In fact, I believe that to properly grasp certification programs and their environmental and socio-cultural implications on host communities, it is necessary to understand their culture, habits and political background. This approach can help explain the challenges that hotel employees can experience when trying to implement Green Globe criteria, while also providing examples on the importance for certification programs to become more customized to each destination’s needs and capabilities.

In the case of this thesis, I was considered to be an ‘observer-as-participant’ since my role was known by the participants (Creswell, 2009, p. 179). This approach was advantageous since it allowed me to record information as it occurred while having a first-hand experience with the participants. In fact, I kept a daily diary, writing about the events that occurred during the day and my interpretation of them in relation with the associated literature. Although this approach has the potential to introduce bias from the part of the researcher, I felt that for the most part, I had an accurate understanding of the Barbadian reality. Although the culture and language were different from Cancun, since Barbados’ culture is highly influenced by its British heritage, I could still relate several attitudes and behaviours to my childhood experience. To a certain extent, growing up in a popular tourist destination helped me quickly develop an understanding of Barbados’ local culture and its tourism product.

According to Creswell (2009), observation is an essential component of qualitative studies since it is through the observation of people’s everyday realities and their interactions amongst each other that several lessons can be learned. Moreover, observation is a crucial step when aiming to triangulate and validate the information collected through interviews and secondary sources (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; UWE Flick, 2007). Despite these advantages, this

technique also comprises several limitations. For example, it is important to acknowledge that the attitude of the people observed might have changed due to my presence. Furthermore, as explained previously, data can be open to misinterpretation from my part due to cultural differences. Thus, it is extremely important in this case for the author to stay as resourceful, systematic and honest as possible to help control personal bias (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Once again, I aimed to stay objective and transparent throughout the process and observations were conducted at two levels: the hotels and the community members on the South Coast of the island. The next sub-sections will describe in further detail how these observations were conducted.

### **3.5.3.1 Observation at the Community Level**

Although I had the chance to travel around the island, most of my observations occurred in the South Coast. In fact, I spent the first ten days of my field work in a guesthouse in Oistins. This small fishing village, although not as developed as other parts of the South Coast, comprised one of the most beautiful beaches of the island, Miami Beach, and during the weekend, hosted one of the most popular tourist attractions, ‘Oistins Fish Fry’. Tourists from all over the island come on Fridays and Saturdays to participate to this event, eating local fish from small stands and dancing to the rhythms of Caribbean music. During my short stay in Oistins, I spent the majority of my time at the local fish stands and in Miami Beach, where locals usually hang out after 5 pm. This opportunity allowed me to observe the everyday life of Barbadians and also have a firsthand experience on how ‘Oistins Fish Fry’ can affect the local community during the weekends.

I also spent five days in a guesthouse in Dover, a small community located beside The Gap, where most of the night clubs and restaurants of Barbados are located. This short stay allowed me to observe locals in a very different setting compared to Oistins. In Dover and The Gap, locals were more likely to be male and of a ‘harassing nature’ since they would make advances towards female tourists and/or tried to sell drugs to male visitors. In fact, the ‘beach boy’ phenomenon was noticeable in these two communities since I observed on several occasions older foreign ladies spending time with young Barbadian males.

Finally, I was offered an amazing opportunity, and stayed in the house of an expatriate for the remainder of my field work. The house was centrally located in St Michael, a five minute walk

from Carlisle Bay, a beautiful and popular beach, and a 20 minute walk from Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados. This interesting opportunity allowed me to interact not only with local Barbadians, but also with local expatriates that have lived on the island for over 30 years. Furthermore, the woman for who I was ‘housesitting,’ also owned a pit bull, Fridae, that I was also in charge of babysitting for a month and a half. Taking care of Fridae in Barbados was a cultural experience on its own, since local Barbadians are unlikely to walk their dogs, perceiving this domestic animals to be ‘guardians of their house and not pets that you walk around’ (Respondent 5). Thus, being in charge of the everyday details of the house, including the payment of bills, allowed me to have a greater understanding of Barbados daily reality.

#### **3.5.3.2 Observations at Hotels**

Observation was also conducted with the ten Green Globe certified hotels. In addition to documenting the location of each establishment, I also examined each hotel’s location in relation to the surrounding community. Several questions were kept in mind when observing the different properties: is the hotel physically separated from the community or is it surrounded by it? Are there obvious signs warning locals to stay off the property? Are there local restaurants that hotel guests can easily walk to? These questions helped analyse how the hotels’ location might have an impact, either positively or negatively, on the surrounding community. I recorded all this information in an Excel document that I divided according to the different questions listed previously.

To corroborate the information collected during the interviews with hotel employees and to have a general perspective of what occurs on the hotels’ premises, I decided to stay at three different certified establishments. Due to budget restrictions, I chose one hotel from each of the three categories (small, medium and large scale) and stayed a total of three nights at each property: the Easterly Hotel (small scale), the Sunny Beach hotel (medium scale) and the Caribbean Sunshine (large hotel). During my stay at these hotels, I was able to observe the different daily practices of the hotels. For example, I observed how recycling was collected and divided by the employees, if the linens and bed sheets were changed every, what were the different programs and activities offered to the customers and how much of the local culture did the hotel embrace in its architecture and decoration. All these observations were divided by pre-established categories and recorded on an Excel document.

### **3.5.4 Analysis of Secondary Sources**

Finally, the last data collection technique used in this qualitative study involved the analysis of secondary sources. This approach is intended to either support the information collected during the research and/or find contradictions that can help push the research to the next level. According to Marshall & Rossman (1989), the analysis of secondary sources is an ‘unobtrusive measure’ to collect data and is particularly useful for triangulation purposes. In other words, this method can help collect data without arousing notice from subjects, while also being used as a supplement to check the truthfulness and accuracy of the information gathered. Furthermore, since it often involves using data already collected by others (i.e. archival records, journal articles), its collection tends to be a relatively simple practice (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

As explained previously, analysing secondary sources can allow the author to triangulate the information collected throughout the study. However, this approach can also be open to misinterpretation from the part of the researcher due to potential cultural differences. Furthermore, it is especially dependent upon the honesty of those providing the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). This is especially the case with some of the travel guides and brochures found in the hotel premises. The next sub-sections will describe in further detail the different secondary sources that I used to collect information on the topic studied.

#### **3.5.4.1 Census and Government Statistics**

Census data and government statistics can provide interesting information on a country’s population. During my stay, I went to the Bridgetown Public Library at several occasions. This public library had a rather large selection of government statistics and census data that helped collect important information on the island, such as Barbados’ Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment statistics, tourist arrivals, amongst other details. Several documents from the Central Bank of Barbados and the Ministry of Tourism were found in the reference section of the library. However, these issues were not up to date, the most recent record dating from 2007. For the purposes of this thesis, I either recorded all the different information or photocopied the documents for future reference.

#### **3.5.4.2 Local Literature**

I also spent several afternoons in the library of the University of West Indies. This library had a large selection of articles and books describing the history of the country from a Barbadian

perspective. Some of these documents were specific to the island and have not been found in local Canadian libraries. At the end, I was able to gather information on sustainable tourism practices, the historical background of Barbados, and on tourism development in both the island and the Caribbean. Once again, I either transcribed all the different information or photocopied the documents for future reference.

#### **3.5.4.3 Newspapers, Magazines, Brochures and ‘Information Binders’**

During the duration of my field research, I also collected travel guides, brochures, newspaper articles and other general documents that were found across the island and that pertained to tourism development. These types of documents provided interesting information on Barbados, its politics, and socio-cultural background. However, as Cukier (1996) explains, it is important to keep in mind that these documents often lack academic rigour and thus, the contained information can be biased and based on personal testimonials or opinions. However, brochures and travel guides provided me with a general idea of the different tourism events, festivals and activities offered to visitors on the island. When visiting or staying at the different certified hotels, I also collected brochures and other information found on their premises. Moreover, when I stayed at the three hotels described previously, I photocopied pertinent pages of the ‘information binders’ situated in the hotel’s room.

Local newspapers can also provide a general sense of the issues occurring in the host community, allowing for a better understanding of the local culture. However, it is important to acknowledge that newspapers can be biased, potentially reflecting ‘an editorial stance unknown or unseen by the researcher or be affected by government censorship which can cloud the presentation of ‘truths’ (Cukier, 1996, p. 74). In fact, I found that local newspapers, such as *The Nation* and *Barbados Advocate*, were inclined to be rather positive, not really addressing major societal concerns occurring on the island. One tourism professional explained during an interview how the Barbadian government tends to sometimes avoid complicated issues, keeping the information as superficial as possible to avoid confusion amongst the public (Tourism professional 1). Most of the newspaper articles I collected for the purposes of this thesis were found in the *Barbados Advocate*, since this newspaper had a website and thus, electronic copies were easily accessible.

The previous section has provided a detailed description on my sample choices and the three data collection techniques used to gather information. It is now necessary to discuss the process that I undertook to analyse all this qualitative data. The next section will provide further details on the different steps that I employed to organize, categorize and make sense of all the collected evidence.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

As explained previously, I transcribed all the interviews and maintained a daily diary of my general observations during my stay in Barbados. Furthermore, several newspaper articles, brochures and magazines were collected for triangulation purposes. Once back in Canada, I started to organize and analyze the different data collected during my field work. As Marshall & Rossman (1989) explain, qualitative studies tend to be ‘messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative’ without necessarily proceeding ‘in a linear fashion’ (p. 113). Therefore, it is important for the researcher to be as organized and methodical as possible throughout the data analysis process. In fact, in order to facilitate the examination of the evidence collected, I decided to follow the five steps suggested by Marshall & Rossman (1989): 1) organize the data; 2) generate categories, themes and patterns; 3) test the emergent hypotheses against the data; 4) search for alternative explanations; 5) writing the report. The next section will describe these different steps of data analysis in greater detail.

#### **3.6.1 Organizing the Data and Generating Categories**

Once in Canada, the first step I decided to take was to read all the gathered information at least once to become more familiarized with my data, while also reflecting on its overall meaning. A second reading was also undertaken and at this time, I started to colour code all the available evidence. According to Rossman & Rallis (1998), coding is ‘the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information’ (as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 186). This process allowed the clustering of similar topics and/or themes, in a systematic and organized fashion.

The information was colour coded following a combination of predetermined codes and emerging new ones. In fact, to start this coding process, I chose a few themes in advance such as environmental, cultural and community-related categories. These pre-established themes were guided by the related literature on the topic, but mostly inspired by the questions used during the



semi-structured interviews. According to Marshall & Rossman (1989), ‘this earlier grounding and planning can be used to suggest several variables that can serve to code the data initially for subsequent analysis’ (p. 114). I also added any new recurrent themes that would surge during the reading process and that pertained to the goal and objectives of this study. Moreover, since generating themes is a process that requires a strong understanding and awareness of the data, I read the collected information several times and revised the categories at numerous occasions to ensure that the latter were as precise and specific as possible (Creswell, 2009).

The process of coding allowed me to identify and group together salient and recurrent themes. This coding approach helped isolate the important information from the less useful data. This process was done with careful attention to ensure that no important details would be disregarded by accident. Once these themes were determined, I started to organize all the evidence in an Excel spread sheet, where each column represented the established categories. This organization prepared the information for the next steps of this analysis that will be described in the following section.

### **3.6.2 Testing Emergent Themes and Searching for Alternative Explanations**

Once the categories decided, the next step was to evaluate and test the goals and objectives of this study against the information collected. This process involved searching through the data, comparing it to grounded theory and related literature, finding the reasons for any discrepancies and challenging if necessary the pre-established hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, Creswell, 2009). These approaches were necessary to evaluate the credibility, accuracy and usefulness of the gathered evidence. In other words, the researcher must determine at this point ‘whether or not the data are useful in illuminating the questions being explored and whether or not they are central to the story that is unfolding about the social phenomenon’ (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.119).

The initial step I took was to analyse each set of data separately. First, all the interviews were analyzed and compared in order to pinpoint commonalities, tendencies and/or contradictions. Then, I undertook a similar comparative analysis with both the observations amassed and the secondary sources. After this single level of examination, the three categories of data were then evaluated, compared and referred to each other to find any further similarities or inconsistencies amongst them (UWE Flick, 2007). This process intended to connect all the information, while

corroborating the answers of the different respondent groups. In fact, I isolated any contradictions that would emerge, searching for reasonable explanations elucidating these differences. Once this analysis was completed, and the best plausible explanation identified, I undertook the next and final step of data analysis: writing the report.

### **3.7 Triangulation**

Triangulation is one of the validity strategies used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Denzin (1970) refers to this concept as a ‘plan of action that will raise sociologists above the personalistic biases that stem from single methodologies. By combining methods in the same study, observers can partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from one investigator and/or method’ (as cited in UWE Flick, 1970, p. 42). Furthermore, Denzin (1970) divides triangulation in four different categories: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and triangulation of methods.

For the purpose of this study, and to ensure the validity of the evidence collected, multiple methods of data collection were used (interviews, observation and analysis of secondary sources) to corroborate the data gathered during field work. According to Cukier (1996), the use of more than one technique can help verify (triangulate) evidence adding in return further validity to the study. Furthermore, the combination of different data collection practices can help maximize the objectivity and validity of each technique since this approach can help use one method’s strength to compensate for another method’s weakness (Creswell, 2009; Webb et al., 1996; Denzin, 1970, as cited in UWE Flick, 2007). In fact, I consider that employing multiple methods helped cross reference the evidence collected while also reducing the potential of generating flawed findings (Creswell, 2009). Thus, I feel confident that the information presented in this thesis is valid and reliable.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

When a researcher decides to study human beings, it is imperative that he or she adheres to important ethical principles. Since this study involved direct contact with the participants, ethical clearance was received from the Office of Research of the University of Waterloo. At the beginning of each interview, I orally explained this information to the potential respondents and informed them that participation in the study was voluntary, having the right to withdraw at anytime during the interview. Furthermore, I provided the participants with a letter containing

my details and those of my supervisor and affiliated university, and other general information and clarification about the aims and expectations of the research. I also made clear to the respondents that confidentiality would be guaranteed if requested. In the case that participants wished anonymity, their names and/or associations were modified for the purposes of this study. Anonymity was also granted at several occasions even if it was not requested by the interviewees. Only participants who were aged eighteen or older were asked to participate in the study and mangoes were given as token of appreciation for participating in the interviews.

### **3.9 Biases and Research Limitations**

To ensure methodological transparency, it is also important to acknowledge some of the limitations and potential biases that could have influenced this research. As per definition, qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry in which ‘researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 176). In other words, the researcher is responsible for interpreting the meaning of the data collected, while attempting to be as methodical and transparent as possible. According to Creswell (2009), self-reflection from the part of the author is important in qualitative studies since the background of the researcher, his or her history and prior understandings can influence the way data is collected and how results are analysed. As explained previously, I am a Canadian married female, in my late twenties, who had the chance to grow up in Cancun, Mexico. I am from a middle-class family and have completed a post-secondary degree. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that my personal experiences and background might have influenced my methods and consequent analyses. Several concrete examples have already been presented and will continue to be provided throughout this thesis aiming to maximize the transparency and accuracy of this study.

I also acknowledge that by not audio taping the interviews, some of the words and expressions used by the respondents might be slightly different and potentially biased by my personal vocabulary. However, key notes were written during the meetings to ensure accuracy, and were transcribed as soon as the interviews were over. Moreover, although I made sure to take several pictures during my stay in Barbados, the pictures were deleted by accident a few days before I left the island. Therefore, I do not have as much supporting visual evidence of my observations as I wished for.

Another potential limitation to this research is the fact that it lacks a quantitative component to it. In fact, it would have been helpful to examine the relationship between variables from a quantitative perspective, especially in the case of indicators (e.g. the level of compliance to the Green Globe indicators in relation with the size of the hotels). A mixed methods approach would have helped provide this quantitative angle, while also providing more depth to the study. However, as explained previously, only a few studies have examined certification programs from a qualitative perspective. Therefore, this approach has not only allowed for a greater understanding of Green Globe and its practices, but also of other surrounding issues that strongly shape this certification program.

Since field work in Barbados occurred during tourism low season (May and June 2011), managers and hotel directors were reluctant to allow me to meet with other employees since they claimed to be understaffed or busy with other projects. Thus, I was not able to corroborate through other interviews the information provided by the management of the certified hotels. However, analysis of secondary sources, such as hotel websites and in-room binders, were used to support (or refute) the information collected during these semi-structured interviews.

I also found hotel managers, environmental officers and directors to have relatively busy schedules, sometimes only allowing 20 minutes of their time for the interviews. Moreover, since the perception of time is different in Barbados, several respondents either arrived late to the appointment or had completely forgotten about it until I showed up. In certain occasions, it would take up to two weeks before an appointment could be obtained. Furthermore, it is important to mention that it took me at least a few weeks to properly understand how the different tourism professionals and the Barbadian government related to each other. Therefore, I feel that another month in Barbados would have been helpful in collecting more information. However, due to both personal commitments and budget constraints, I was not able to spend more time on the island.

Finally, another challenge to my field work was that I was a female researcher in a male-centred culture. In fact, Barbadian males have a history of 'harassment' towards female tourists, especially when the latter are travelling alone (Pattullo, 1996). Due to this situation, at several instances I did not feel comfortable approaching Barbadian men, especially in The Gap where men tended to be particularly insistent. In a couple of occasions, I even had to stop interviews as

the male respondents were getting too familiar and inappropriate with me, turning the questions into a flirting scene. Thus, this situation reduced the number of potential male participants, and I ended up with a majority of female respondents. On the other hand, it was also found that certain females were not always the friendliest since they seemed to think that I was trying to steal Barbadian men from them. This situation was confirmed by an interviewee who further explained that Barbadian females liked ‘attention’, being annoyed when foreigners would take male interest away from them (Tourism professional 1). This situation is very similar to Cancun and I was not necessarily surprised by these reactions.

Several of these limitations are a result of the complicated colonial history of the island that has shaped the culture, perception or beliefs of its population. The next chapter will describe in detail the historical, socio-cultural and political background of Barbados. This information is important since it will provide a deeper understanding of this island’s background, necessary to properly analyse and discuss the data collected during field work.

## **4.0 Case Study**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The following chapter describes the case study for this research, Green Globe certified hotels on the island of Barbados, and provides a general background of Barbados. As described previously, Green Globe was the certification program selected for this thesis due to its international scope and large selection of companies that it certifies. Therefore, the first section of this chapter will provide information on the evolution of Green Globe since its creation in 1993, while also examining the process tourism businesses have to go through in order to achieve and/or maintain certification. This review will not only result in expanded knowledge of this program, but will also identify the potential benefits or limitations of Green Globe's different practices. The second section will focus on Barbados' history, economy and socio-cultural background. This information will provide a clearer understanding of how the history, economy and culture of a host destination can influence and shape certification programs, especially in the context of small islands with a strong colonial legacy such as Barbados. The variety of data provided in this chapter was collected through several secondary sources, including books and journal articles from both the University of West Indies and the University of Waterloo; and government statistics, economic and social data found in the websites of different international organisations such as the UN, the UNWTO, Green Globe and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Moreover, data gathered during semi-structured interviews and the personal observations of the researcher were also used to further understand both Green Globe and Barbados' general background.

### **4.2 Green Globe**

Green Globe was initiated by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in 1993 to codify the principles of sustainable development discussed during the 1992 Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro (Font & Harris, 2004). Originally established in the United Kingdom, this program is a first attempt to have a single and global certification program regulating diverse forms of tourism such as hotels, tourism attractions, cruises, airlines and even entire destinations (Green Globe Website, 2012). Operated as a private company since 1999, Green Globe relocated its Head Office to Los Angeles, California, and is currently overseen by an international advisory council consisting of 'representatives from the tourism industry, non-governmental organizations

and consultant firms from around the world' (Griffin & DeLacy, 2002, p. 63; Green Globe Website, 2012).

Throughout the years, Green Globe has established several preferred partnerships with organisations in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America (Green Globe Brochure, 2011). Today, Green Globe's biggest affiliation is with 'Green Seal', an American certification program that also provides consumer information regarding 'green' cleaning products and services (Buckley, 2002; Green Seal, 2012). According to Griffin & DeLacy (2002), these preferred partners work in close collaboration with Green Globe, promoting membership of the latter amongst their different members. For example, this situation can be observed in the Caribbean, where Green Globe's strategic alliance with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) has led to the proliferation of Green Globe memberships in the region since 1997. In fact, the CHTA has been promoting Green Globe for the past decade as the preferred certification program amongst its different Caribbean hotels and tourism attractions (Griffin & DeLacy, 2002, p. 60).

Green Globe is a relatively young program that has evolved tremendously since its creation in 1993, with its advisory committee constantly reviewing and updating the practices, criteria and indicators of this certification program. This approach aims to improve and ease the process for its members, while ensuring that Green Globe criteria conform to the latest standards of sustainability (Buckley, 2002; Green Globe Website, 2012). The next sections will examine in further detail Green Globe's evolution over the years and the different steps that tourism companies have to follow to attain and/or maintain their certification status.

#### **4.2.1 The Certification Process**

At its inception, Green Globe had flexible criteria and a lenient monitoring process to encourage maximum registration from different tourism organisations, such as hotels and tourism attractions. However, it soon became obvious that this laxity was leading to a lack of transparency from the part of this program, creating in return mistrust amongst consumers and other tourism parties (Buckley, 2002). As a result, Green Globe decided to make several modifications to its overall certification process, including the revision of its criteria and auditing approach. For example, this program established the *Green Globe Certification Standards*, a comprehensive benchmark system intended to continuously assess the sustainability performance

of the tourism companies seeking to achieve and/or maintain certification (Font & Tribe, 2001; Green Globe Brochure, 2011). The following sub-section will provide greater details on this system.

#### **4.2.1.1 The Green Globe Sustainability Standard**

Green Globe Sustainability Standard is ‘a structured assessment of the sustainability performance of travel and tourism businesses and their supply chain partners. Businesses can monitor improvements and document achievements leading to certification of their enterprises’ (Green Globe Website, 2012). This program is reviewed and updated twice a year by Green Globe’s advisory council, and are based on the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria (STC), Baseline Criteria of the Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas, The Mohonk Agreement, and the principles for Sustainable Development found in Agenda 21 and ISO 14001 (Green Globe Website, 2012) The Green Globe Standard currently involves 337 indicators applied to 41 sustainability criteria, further divided into four main categories: sustainable management, socio-economic<sup>5</sup>, environment and culture (Green Globe Website, 2012). It is important to note that this program tends to use the term ‘standard’ in a different way than the academic literature, referring to a standard as the collection of both the 41 criteria and the 337 indicators. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the researcher will continue to use the terms standard, criteria and indicators as described in section 2.4.1 of this thesis.

To achieve or maintain certification, Green Globe requires that tourism businesses meet at least 51% of these indicators, regardless of the category they belong to (Green Globe Website, 2012). This freedom on the part of Green Globe to let tourism companies choose the indicators they prefer to achieve, can possibly lead businesses to implement the easiest and/or most profitable indicators, potentially disregarding indicators that are essential to achieve proper sustainability. In fact, environmental rather than social indicators are often preferred by tourism businesses due to their perceived profitability (Font & Sasidharan, 2001; Sasidharan et al., 2002). However, to obtain proper sustainability, socio-cultural indicators, such as taking actions to help

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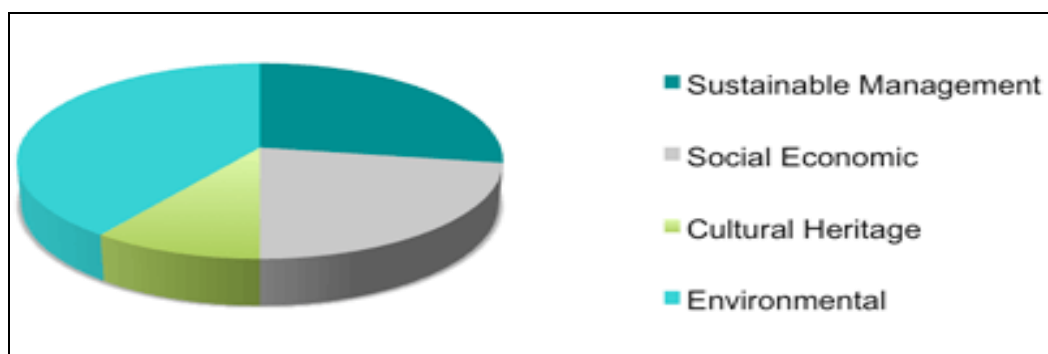
<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the terms ‘socio-cultural’ and ‘socio-economic’ criteria will be used interchangeably. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, socio-cultural criteria encompass ‘the broader range of social and economic issues of benefit to the local community that are usually interlinked’ (Font & Harris, 2004, p. 987).



the local community and/or promote its culture, should also be included in the requirements hoteliers need to meet before being able to obtain certification (Font & Harris, 2004; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005)

It is also interesting to note that at its inception, Green Globe's criteria had a strong environmental focus. It is only since 2000 that Green Globe started to include social and cultural criteria in its agenda (Font & Harris, 2004). Figure 4.1 illustrates the current distribution of the 41 Green Globe's sustainability criteria in the four main categories:

**Figure 4.1** *Green Globe's Standard Criteria Divided per Category*



**Source:** Green Globe Website, 2012

The researcher acknowledges that Figure 4.1 only provides an estimated idea of the current distribution of the 41 criteria into the four categories, without presenting exact numbers or percentages. In fact, this information was not found on Green Globe's website or its current brochure. Thus, in order to remedy this situation and to have a better understanding of the current distribution of the criteria in each category, the author of this thesis decided to manually calculate this percentage using information found in another section of Green Globe's website:

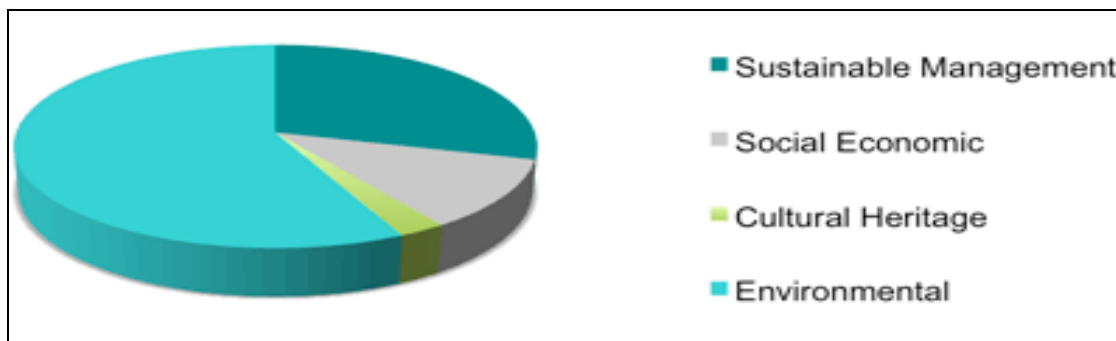
**Table 4.1** *Proportion of Green Globe's Standard Criteria under Each Category*

Category	Number of Criteria	Percentage (%)
Sustainable Management	10	24
Socio-Economic	9	22
Cultural Heritage	4	10
Environmental	18	44

**Source:** Adapted from Green Globe Website, 2012

As demonstrated by both Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1, the environmental category appears to contain the majority of Green Globe's 41 standard criteria (44%). However, it is also important to analyse how the 337 standard indicators are further distributed amongst the four main categories since it will provide with a more accurate idea of the final distribution. Figure 4.2 provides once again an estimate of the repartition of Green Globe's indicators into each category:

**Figure 4.2** *Green Globe's Standard Indicators Divided per Main Categories*



**Source:** Green Globe Website, 2012

The author of this thesis acknowledges that similar to Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2 does not provide exact numbers reflecting the exact proportion of the 337 indicators into each category. However, this information was once again not provided by both Green Globe's website and brochure. Moreover, contrary to Figure 4.1, the author was unable to manually calculate percentages since the website required her to register and pay the applicable registration fees before being able to access this information (Green Globe Website, 2012). Despite this unfortunate situation, Figure 4.2 still provides a general idea of the distribution of the 337 indicators into the four categories,

showing that the majority of these indicators are found in the environmental category (over 50%).

As demonstrated by the previous figures (4.1 and 4.2) and Table 4.1, it appears that Green Globe continues to grant a higher level of importance to both environmental criteria and indicators in comparison to the three other categories. This situation can perhaps be explained by the tendency for Green Globe to be ‘financed and staffed by tourism industry trade associations and other major players, such as hotel chains’ that tend to prioritize environmental criteria in their agendas due to their perceived profitability (Honey & Rome, 2000 as cited in Sasidharan et al., 2002). In fact, these private donations can potentially clarify the general inclination for certification programs such as Green Globe to promote environmental criteria over socio-cultural and economic ones.

#### **4.2.1.2 The Training Process**

Green Globe can offer training courses and workshops to the different tourism businesses seeking to achieve and/or maintain certification, and that are having difficulty implementing certain indicators (Buckley, 2002). In fact, it is interesting to note that Green Globe’s website does not provide concrete examples on how the 337 indicators could be (or should be) implemented, leaving the responsibility to the tourism companies to find ways and solutions on how to implement these indicators (Buckley, 2002). Thus, if the tourism venture requests it, and is willing to pay the applicable fees (that are not included in the annual membership rate), Green Globe can offer educational material and customized workshops adapted to the needs and capabilities of each establishment (Green Globe Brochure, 2011). For example, Green Globe launched the *Green Globe Sustainability Course* in 2010, a program aiming to offer on-site tutorials and tailored coaching to the organisations pursuing certification. Not only are the tourism ventures required to pay for this course, the fee based on the size of the organisation, but the businesses are also responsible for covering the travel expenses necessary to bring the trainer to their premises (Green Globe Brochure, 2011).

It is also important to mention that due to Green Globe’s international scope, this certification program was highly criticized in its origins since its criteria was inclined to be globally applied without taking into consideration the needs and specificities of each destination (Buckley, 2002). To remedy this situation and ensure that the needs of each community were customized, Green

Globe began to provide tailored guidelines and training manuals depending on the geographical location of the tourism company seeking certification. According to Buckley (2002), although this approach is a fine starting point, it still puts the onus on the tourism ventures to adopt the practices and procedures that would best suit their needs and those of the communities surrounding them; in several cases, the companies might not have the necessary skills and expertise to accurately assess which models will be the most appropriate for them (Buckley, 2002). Thus, despite Green Globe's effort to become more 'destination-specific' over the years, tourism ventures may still require assistance from a professional, being subsequently forced to pay additional fees for the services of a personal trainer.

#### **4.2.2 The Auditing Process**

Once a tourism business has attained the required benchmark (i.e. implementing at least 51% of the 337 indicators), the next step involves contacting a Green Globe approved auditor who will conduct an on-site inspection to verify the necessary criteria has been met (Green Globe Brochure, 2012). The auditor's role is to provide Green Globe clients with third party verification to ensure they are achieving the necessary requirements, while performing according to the highest standards of sustainability (Bohdanowicz et al., 2005). All Green Globe auditors are professional environmental or sustainability consultants who have undergone the appropriate Green Globe certification training (Green Globe Brochure, 2011). In fact, these professionals have to complete a *Green Globe Certification Auditor Accreditation Course* before Green Globe can include their name to the list of potential third-party auditors (Green Globe Brochure, 2011). This training program involves two days of extensive workshops and course materials, costing up to US\$1990. This fee includes the cost of the course and covers the first year's annual Green Globe auditor membership fee, normally valued at US\$1000 (Green Globe Brochure, 2012). After the first year, and in order to continue being part of the Green Globe third-party auditing list, the auditors have to annually renew their membership by paying an additional US\$1000 a year (Green Globe Brochure, 2011).

An on-site audit is usually performed between 2 and 3.5 days, depending on the size and complexity of the client being audited (Green Globe Brochure, 2011). During this inspection, the auditor is responsible for collecting information from the different indicators and comparing this

data with the relevant baseline<sup>6</sup> and best practices<sup>7</sup> of the destination, market or activity the tourism business belongs to. It is important to note that these benchmark values are based on ‘the data published worldwide in industry surveys and audits, case studies and design handbooks’, being customized to each country’s specificities (Bohdanowicz et al., 2005, p. 1644). This auditing process is not free of charge for Green Globe clients: the cost varies depending on the size and needs of the business pursuing certification<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, companies not only have to pay fees for the auditing report, but also have to cover the travel expenses of the auditor, such as flight (if necessary), hotel and meal expenses (Green Globe Website, 2012; Tourism professional 1).

Green Globe established the *Green Globe Academy*, a web-based program that has not only eliminated most of the paper work, but also helps ‘users with online registration procedures, course registration and payment, downloadable course material and certification renewal’ (Green Globe Brochure, 2011). This e-program is designed to help and guide first time users through the different steps of the certification process, while also allowing already certified companies to annually renew their certification by completing the necessary online reports.

Certification is awarded: 1) once the auditor confirms that the venture has met the necessary requirements and; 2) after paying the applicable Green Globe membership fees (Green Globe Website, 2012). In fact, not only do these tourism businesses have to pay for the training process (if desired) and other auditing charges, but they also need to pay for Green Globe’s annual membership fee. As shown by Table 4.2, these charges vary according to the size of the business, Green Globe dividing the hotels into five categories depending on the number of rooms and employees of each establishment:

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<sup>6</sup> Baseline refers to the minimum benchmark required to achieve certification (Bohdanowicz et al., 2005, p. 1644).

<sup>7</sup> Best practices involve the measure of best practices of the destination /activity/ market (Bohdanowicz et al., 2005, p. 1644).

<sup>8</sup> The researcher was not able to find any specific examples of the range of costs.

**Table 4.2** *Annual Membership Rates (not including the consulting and auditing process)*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Size of Hotel (number of rooms)</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Annual Membership Rate (in US dollars)</b>
Micro	Up to 19 rooms	1 to 9	\$750
Small	20 to 59 rooms	10 to 19	\$1,450
Medium	60 to 99	20 to 69	\$2,500
Medium/Large	100 to 249	70 to 119	\$3,800
Large	250 and up	120 and up	\$5,000

**Source:** Green Globe Website, 2012

Once the fees are paid and the Green Globe auditor confirms that all the requirements have been met, the tourism venture becomes officially certified, and is allowed to use Green Globe's logo in its marketing campaigns and other promotional materials. The literature often perceives this logo as an important marketing tool for tourism ventures, since it can help businesses advertise their achievements to the general public, hoping that customers in return would choose the certified property over a 'non-sustainable' one (Johnson, 2002; Mycoo, 2006; Buckley, 2002).

#### **4.2.3 Summary**

This section has provided a general overview of Green Globe, its background and different certification processes. Although this program offers several benefits to the certified tourism businesses, such as potential marketing advantages, it is currently facing several limitations. In fact, Green Globe can represent a significant expense for the certified tourism companies since these ventures do not only have to pay for annual membership fees, but also for the training (if desired) and auditing process. However, despite some of these restrictions, it is important to keep in mind that Green Globe is still a relatively new program, aiming to enhance its practices over the years. Thus, it becomes important to work towards the improvement of this program since creating a new international certification program would not simply add to the panoply of the already existent ones, but could potentially experience similar challenges that those currently being faced by Green Globe (Buckley, 2002).

### 4.3 The Context of Barbados

To have a better understanding of Green Globe and its overall processes, the author of this thesis decided to conduct research on the island of Barbados since it is the country with the second most certified hotels. Moreover, Barbados represented an interesting case for field work since it is a relevant example of how a small island, highly dependent on tourism, can adopt certification programs in its tourism product. The following section provides details about Barbados, its history, economy and socio-cultural background. This examination can help pinpoint local attitudes and behaviours that could potentially influence the proper development and/or implementation of the required criteria and indicators.

#### 4.3.1 General Background

Barbados is located in the Atlantic Ocean and is the most easterly island in the chain of Caribbean nations. This country has a relatively small territory measuring 34 km long and 23 km wide, with a total surface area of 430 square kilometres (Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, 2007). While most of its Caribbean neighbours tend to have uneven and rocky terrain due to former volcanic activity, Barbados base is composed of coral stone, with a relatively flat surface favourable to agriculture (Gmelch & Bohn, 1997).

**Figure 4.3:** *Barbados Location in the Caribbean*



Source: World Atlas, 2012

Barbados is part of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), a group of ‘low-lying coastal countries’ that possess several similarities amongst each other, such as small size, fragile ecosystems, limited resources and geographic remoteness (UNWTO, 2004). Due to these characteristics, SIDS tend to share similar sustainable development challenges. For example, their geographic dispersion and isolation places them in an economic disadvantage since it prevents economies of scale and creates for these nations a high dependence on international trade. Moreover, SIDS tend to be more susceptible to natural disasters and other external shocks (UNWTO, 2004).

Despite its small dimensions, Barbados had in 2011 an estimated population size of 286,000 inhabitants, representing one of the most densely populated islands in the world with approximately 666.76 people per square kilometre (Index Mundi, 2011). The capital of Barbados is Bridgetown, located in the parish of St Michael, and has three other major towns: Oistins in the South, and Speightstown and Holetown in the North (Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, 2007). Barbados is divided into eleven different parishes as a result of its British colonial legacy: St James, St Lucy, St Michael, St Peter, St Thomas, St Andrew, St George, St John, St Joseph, St Philip and Christ Church (Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, 2007).

The South Coast of Barbados was referred as the ‘Gold Coast’ in the 70s since this is where tourism development started on the island when apartments, hotels and bars were built to fill the gaps between the old established hotels. By the late 1980s, ‘recession, overbuilding, lack of capital and a new trend in down-market tourism had created stretches of abandoned apartment blocks, smashed-up signs, peeling paintwork, ‘For sale’ boards and deserted, locked-up villas’ (Pattullo, 1996, p.132). These remains can still be seen today with tropical vegetation trying to hide ‘the junk-yard appearance of better days gone before’ (Pattullo, 1996, p.132). Today, most of the hotels, condominiums and tourist-oriented businesses, such as restaurants and boutiques, are located on the South and West Coast (Beckles, 1990). Moreover, the country’s best beaches can be found along the Western and Southern coasts, which are protected from the dominant north-easterly winds that render the East Coast dangerous to swim, but ideal for surfing. Therefore, due to this situation, the majority of Barbadian hotels have established their properties on the South and West Coasts, with most of the local population living on the eastern part of the island (Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, 2007).



**Figure 4.4** *Barbados' East Coast Beach vs. Barbados' South Coast Beach*



**Source:** Pritzi Castaneda, 2011

Barbados tends to market itself as an ‘upper end’ tourist destination, with its high tourism season occurring in the months of December, January and February (Bailey, 2011). According to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), visitors to Barbados spend an average of ten days on the island, 40% of them travelling from the United Kingdom and 32% from North America (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, 2010). Barbados has marked wet (June to November) and dry (December to May) seasons, with the wet season accounting for 60% of the average rainfall on the island. In fact, due to Barbados small size, overall lack of water resources and geographic dispersion, the island strongly depends on the wet season to help replenish its groundwater reserves (Jones & Banner, 2003, as cited in Charara et al., 2011, p. 231).

The island was colonized by the British at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, an historical moment that played -and continues to play- an important role in shaping the present economy and culture of the island. The next section will examine in greater detail Barbados history in order to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and values of the modern Barbadian society.

#### **4.3.2 Historical Background**

According to Gmelch & Bohn (1997), in order to properly understand any Afro-Caribbean society, it is important to know the historical processes that ‘once enslaved people of African descent’ had to go through to establish their own communities and cultures (p.X). Therefore, the

following section will take a closer look at Barbados historical background to gain greater insight on how the island's colonial legacy has shaped and influenced the current Barbadian population and its culture.

When the first British settlers arrived to Barbados in 1627, they found the island to be uninhabited. Taking advantage of this situation, these pioneers decided to take possession of the land under the name of James I, King of England, and established the first English settlement on the West Coast of the island (Beckles, 1990). Although the British colonizers first intended to cultivate cotton and tobacco as major crops, they soon recognized that Barbados' climate was not suited for this type of harvest (Gmelch & Bohn, 1997). Thus, after a few failed attempts, the colonists decided to turn to sugar as the main source of economic activity since Barbados offered the perfect geographical and weather conditions to grow sugar cane. This decision would not only revolutionize the island's economy, but also shape its history and culture for the next centuries to come (Beckles, 1990; Gmelch & Bohn, 1997). In fact, British colonizers started to bring slaves from Africa, forcing them to work in the sugar plantations established on the island, and it is not until 1834 that slavery would be finally abolished in Barbados (CIA World Factbook, 2011).

Barbados finally obtained its independence from Britain in 1966. This liberation was possible thanks to the gradual introduction of social and political reforms by the local population between 1940 and 1960 (CIA World Factbook, 2011). This movement was led by Errol Barrow (1920-1987), a lawyer and economist that pursued his university education in Britain and who became the island's first prime minister. Barrow formed the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and worked hard to modernise the country's economic structure, instituting health insurance and social security on the island (Beckles, 1990). He also expanded the tourism sector by encouraging the construction of several hotels, restaurants and other tourism attractions, an approach that not only helped create employment on the island, but also stimulated Barbados' manufacturing, fishing and construction industries (Beckles, 1990). Thus, Errol Barrow played an important role in helping modernize the country and is honoured today as a national hero and the 'Father of Barbados Independence'.

It is important to note that despite Barbados gaining independence in 1966, Queen Elizabeth II is still the Head of State today, represented on the island by a governor-general (currently the

Honourable Freudel Stuart) (CIA World Factbook, 2011). However, Barbados benefits from overall political freedom, developing over the years a strong democracy functioning as a two-party system: the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) (currently in power), and the Barbados National Party (BNP) (the current opposition party) (CIA World Factbook, 2011). Thanks to a rather stable democracy and the absence of major uprisings or other political issues in its history, Barbados has become a very stable and socially advanced country, making this island a secure location for business and attracting thousands of visitors annually to its shores (Bailey, 2011; Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, 2007).

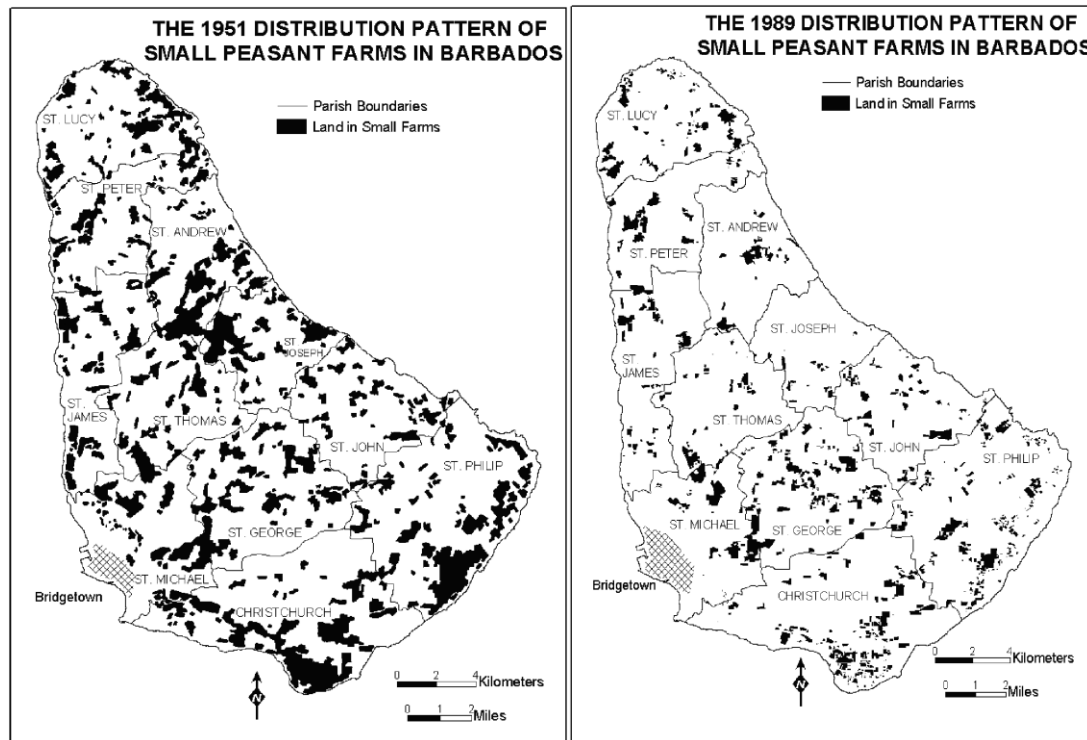
### **4.3.3 Barbados' Economic Situation**

While the introduction of sugar cane to the island is considered to be one of the major and most influential moments in Barbados' history, the country has undergone important economic and social changes throughout the years. The introduction and strong promotion of tourism by the Barrow's government in the late 60s is considered by many authors as the country's next marking historical moment since tourism slowly started to replace sugar production as the main source of income and employment (Beckles, 1990; Gmelch & Bohn, 1997; CIA World Factbook, 2011). This transition has not only changed Barbados' financial systems, but also its local community and culture. The following section will analyse both the past and current trends of the Barbadian economy to have a better understanding of these changes and their effects on the local population.

#### **4.3.3.1 Overall Decline of the Agriculture Sector**

As described previously, British colonists decided in the early 1640s to make sugar cane the major economic activity of the island. Thus, Barbados had a rather agricultural economy and lifestyle that lived up until the mid-twentieth century. It is estimated that in 1961, there were a total of 244 sugar plantations on the island and nearly twenty-eight thousand small farmers, with approximately 90 percent of them growing sugarcane (Gmelch & Bohn, 1997, p.44). However, as shown by figure 4.5, agricultural land has slowly been decreasing over the years.

**Figure 4.5** *Distribution Patterns of Small Peasant Farms in Barbados between 1961 and 1989*



**Source:** Gmelch & Bohn, 1997

According to the Government of Barbados (1991), the surface of crops was reduced by more than half between 1950 and 1989, passing from 27 000 to 12,000 ha (as cited in Momsen, 2005). Moreover, it was estimated that between 1971 and 1989, 1.4 ha of arable land went out of crop production every day, with over 7,700 ha placed on the market for potential buyers (Momsen, 2005). Gmelch & Bohn (1997) attribute this overall decline of the sugar cane cultivation to several reasons:

- The uncertainties of international markets have made the profitability of sugar production insecure and thus, small farmers are looking for alternatives sources of income.
- The new mechanization of sugarcane production has not only reduced the number of people necessary in the sugar industry, but has also pushed aside the farmers that were not able to afford the new technologies or machinery. Therefore, several small planters abandoned sugar cultivation, and either sold their land or started producing other types of local produce.
- New educational opportunities gave the chance to young Barbadians to get better-paying and more rewarding jobs compared to sugar cane cultivation.

- The new generation tends to consider agricultural work as ‘degrading’ (some of these negative feelings can be attributed to a certain extent to the long history of slavery on the island). Gmelch & Bohn (1997) provided the example of twenty year old Rudolph Hinds that after cutting cane for one season decided that he never wanted to do this job again:

People think that cane cutters are stupid. You can come onto a girl, talk to her in a deep voice, and tell her nice things, then you tell her what you do, that you cut cane, and suddenly she ain’t interested no more. People have no respect for you (p.47)

With all these different changes, by 1987, only 69% of small farmers were cultivating sugar cane as their main crop and by 2003, this proportion had further decreased to a drastic 5%, with farmers now tending to produce mostly fruit and vegetables (Momsen, 2005). Most of this agricultural land ended up being redefined into residential and industrial areas, some even being converted into new golf courses in order to satisfy the tourism demand (Government of Barbados, 1991, as cited in Momsen, 2005). For example, in 2004, the Sandy Lane resort transformed a former sugar plantation into an 18-hole golf course that accommodated Tiger Wood’s wedding later on that year (Momsen, 2005).

These new land uses further meant that less agricultural land was accessible on the market for small and independent farmers; if space was available, the cost of the land tended to be exorbitant. This situation caused small Barbadian farmers to relocate to some of the less fertile lands on the island (often having shallow rocks and uneven terrain) since they could not afford better properties. Today, this agricultural concentration is mostly found in the southern parishes of St. Philip and Christ Church, and the northern community of St Lucy (Momsen, 2005).

According to Singh (2002), the changes in land use reflected the transformation that the country was going through since the 1950s: the economy of the island was changing from being strongly based on the production and exportation of sugar and rum to one in which ‘non-sugar agricultural’ activities were becoming ‘more sizeable in terms of Gross Domestic Product’ (as cited in Momsen, 2005, p.211). In fact, over the years, tourism has slowly become the new source of revenue and foreign exchange for Barbados, welcoming annually over half a million visitors from all over the world (Strachan, 2002, as cited in Momsen, 2005).

Small Barbadian farmers are now responding to the increasing demand for fresh and locally grown products from the part of both locals and tourists. Today, Barbados’ main agricultural

provisions include yams, sweet potatoes, eddoes, cassava, carrots, cucumber, okra, poultry and milk (Momsen, 2005). Moreover, local authorities have started to recognize the benefits and advantages of agro-tourism and are now trying to preserve the farming landscape, while also encouraging the production of local produce (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2003). To achieve this last goal, the Barbadian government began offering incentives to small farmers to assist Barbadians provide for their families; moreover, this approach was intended to help the country become less dependent on food imports by improving the productivity of 'local value-added agricultural products' (ADMC, 2003, as cited in Momsen, 2005). Thanks to these initiatives, the proportion of food exported dropped from 41% in 1999 to 33% in 2002 (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2003). It is important to note that despite these official efforts, there are currently no official linkages between the tourism sector and the local agriculture. While in 1987, 11% of Barbadian farmers sold their produce to surrounding hotels, this number slightly decreased in 2003 to 10%. Although not a significant decline, these figures show how linkages between tourism and agriculture have not improved in the past two decades despite government efforts to increase consumption of local foods (Miller, 1985; Richardson 2004, as cited in Momsen, 2005).

#### **4.3.3.2 Barbados' Current Economy**

As shown in the previous section, Barbados has seen major changes in its economic and financial system in the past decades, with tourism slowly replacing sugar cane production as the main source of revenue and employment on the island. Since tourism tends to be a dynamic and fast-changing sector, external factors and/or shocks can easily affect popular tourism destinations such as Barbados (UNWTO, 2004). In fact, the high dependency of this country on tourism revenues has proved to be challenging in the past decade, when the number of visitors significantly declined after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the international economic crisis of 2009. The following sub-section will provide further details on the island's current economic activities, explaining how this decade's global crises have impacted the overall Barbadian economy.

The global economic crisis of 2009 hit Barbados particularly hard and impacted all of its key economic activities, including tourism, financial services, and real estate investment. While in 2004, the tourism sector was the main generator of Barbados' revenues, representing that year

approximately 59% of its total GDP, 2009 saw an important decrease in both tourist arrivals and their expenditures with tourism only contributing to 15% of the island's GDP (UNWTO, 2004; Ministry of Tourism, 2010); moreover, while in 2005 the island welcomed approximately 548,000 visitors, this number decrease to 518,564 in 2009, further affecting Barbados' economy (Ministry of Tourism, 2010). This overall drop in tourism numbers not only affected the tourism sector but also had ripple effects on other Barbadian industries, with significant declines in the wholesale and retail activity (-2.6%), transportation, storage and communication (-2.7%), construction (-16.4%), and mining and quarrying (-35.6%) (UNDP, 2011). Due to this situation, Barbados' GDP in 2009 significantly decreased compared to the previous year, representing a total of US\$3.595 billion dollars (in contrast to 2008's GDP of US\$3.777 billion dollars) (International Monetary Fund, 2011). Surprisingly, despite this general economic decline, Barbados dollar has remained constant, 'being pegged to the U.S. dollar since mid-1975 at the rate of BDS\$ 2.00 = US\$ 1.00' (International Monetary Fund, 2011; Currency Exchange, 2011).

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2011), the overall output of Barbados continued to decline in 2010 although at a smaller rate than the previous year. In fact, since the economic crisis of 2009 weakened the Barbadian economy as a whole, the unemployment rate on the island reached 10.7% in 2010, 2.6 points higher than the 8.1% recorded in 2008 (UNDP, 2011; International Monetary Fund, 2011). As well, the large fiscal imbalances and 'nonfinancial public sectors' deficits continued to persist in 2010 due to reduce government revenues, while still having high expenditures. For example, the IMF lend Barbados in 2010 a total of US\$36 million dollars to implement the *National Housing Corporation Program* that intended to provide 316 housing units to local Barbadians to help improve the living conditions of lower income residents (Caribbean Development Bank, 2010). Due to this situation, the island's fiscal deficit at the end of 2010 reached \$637.4 million (8.2% of GDP) compared to a previous deficit of 433.3 million (5.4% of GDP) in 2008 (Central Bank of Barbados, 2008). Moreover, the IMF estimated that in 2011 the public debt could approach 115% of Barbados' GDP at the end of the fiscal year (International Monetary Fund, 2011).

#### **4.3.3.3 Tourism in Barbados**

Since the 1950s, Barbados has become a mature tourism destination, developing a strong tourism product based mostly on sun, sea and sand (the 3 'S' of tourism). In 2009, Barbados

attracted a total of 518,564 visitors and 635,212 cruise passengers (Ministry of Tourism, 2010). Proponents of tourism tend to claim that this sector represents an important source of income for tourism destinations such as Barbados, while also being a key generator of employment for these nations (UNWTO, 2004; Gmelch & Bohn, 1997). However, despite these advantages, tourism can also negatively impact the local environment and surrounding community of these host communities. In fact, today much of the South and West Coasts of the island are covered with hotels, condominiums and tourist-oriented businesses such as restaurants and gift shops. While these provide Barbadians with employment opportunities and new interesting services, these properties have blocked the general access to the beach to the local population and have created overall visual pollution (Gmelch & Bohn, 1997). Other current environmental issues on the island include the pollution of coastal waters from cruise ship waste disposal that visit the island every week, overall soil and sand erosion, and the increasing contamination of aquifers due to illegal solid waste disposal from both hotels and cruise ships (CIA World Factbook, 2011; United Nations Environment Programme, 2011).

Some of these negative environmental effects can be attributed to the lack of proper coordination and management from the part of the Barrow's government when the DLP decided to promote tourism in the 60s. In fact, an 'ad hoc' approach mostly represented the type of planning used to originally develop tourism in Barbados. However, the Barbadian government and other tourism stakeholders are increasingly embracing a more holistic approach to tourism development since they recognize the importance and necessity to adopt sustainable tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2010). Today, tourism planning and development on the island is overseen by the Ministry of Tourism, the Barbados Tourism Association (BTA), the Barbados Hotel & Tourism Association (BHTA), and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA).

These different tourism stakeholders have been working in the past years on several projects that aim to conserve the island's natural resources, while also helping improve the general well-being of the Barbadian community. For instance, in 2010, the Ministry of Tourism issued *The White Paper*, a guide to tourism development that addresses some of the concerns mentioned previously and that are considered critical for the sustainability of the tourism sector in Barbados. According to *The White Paper*, the island needs to adopt the following guidelines to ensure that Barbados develops a sustainable tourism product:



- It is important for Barbados to improve its human resources by standardizing the level of service quality across the island if the country wants to stay competitive.
- Most of the islands on the Caribbean tend to offer a similar tourism product than Barbados and thus, it will be necessary for the country to diversify their markets and develop new niche products such as farm stays, heritage tourism and adventure tourism.
- It will be imperative that the island enhances its environmental sustainability since this is a crucial step for ensuring that the country will continue to be a clean and attractive destination.
- The island also needs to adopt measures aiming to preserve its cultural patrimony since the built environment is a significant component of Barbados' heritage and tourism product.
- It will be important for tourism providers, such as hotels and restaurants, to increase their use of local goods and services as this approach will help decrease the island's dependency on imports, while improving its overall economy.

(as cited in the Ministry of Tourism, 2010).

With these different goals in mind, the Barbadian government has already developed in the past years different tourism acts and projects that aim to promote and develop sustainable tourism. According to the Ministry of Tourism (2010), the local authorities have already started to implement the following projects: the Tourism Development Act<sup>9</sup>, the Culture Heritage Programme<sup>10</sup> and the Agro-Tourism Project<sup>11</sup>.

These programs are only a few examples of the several projects that the Barbadian government has undertaken in the past years. These measures are intended to improve Barbados' image and tourism product in order for the island to stay competitive in today's market. Since Barbados economy is highly dependent on tourism as a source of revenue and employment, it is important for the local government to 'continue applying and/or applying new measures to remain viable and sustainable for future generations' (Ministry of Tourism, 2010). This approach will help the Barbadian local community maintain the high living standards they currently enjoy and that will be further discussed in the following section.

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<sup>9</sup> A program that offers incentives to restaurants, hotels and recreational activities to further develop and enhance their tourism product.

<sup>10</sup> A project that seeks to improve Barbados' unique colonial and indigenous culture. For example, the local authorities financed in 2009 the restoration of the George Washington House, the residence where the United States' first president, George Washington, stayed while he resided in Barbados.

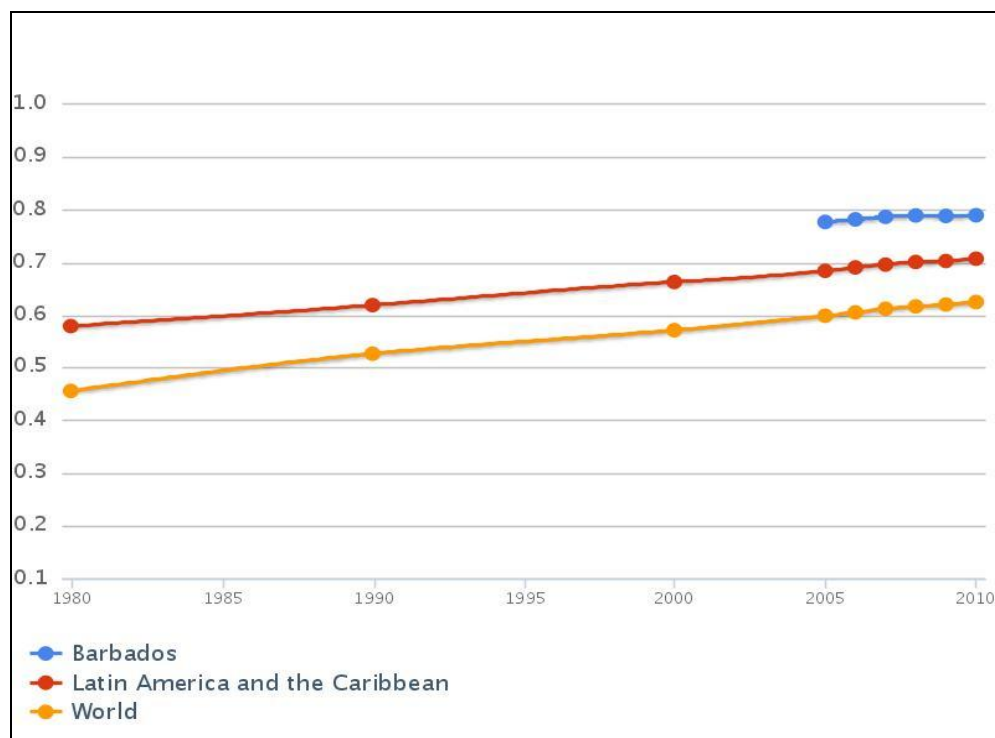
<sup>11</sup> A program that seeks to encourage the further development of linkages between tourism and the agricultural sector.

#### 4.3.4 General Overview of Barbados' Social Situation

Barbados is a mature tourism destination considered a 'developed' nation by both the World Bank and the UN since this island offers high standards of living to its local population. In fact, due to its overall political, economic and social stability, Barbados is considered to be one of the most populous and prosperous islands in the Caribbean (BBC, 2012). The following section will examine several indicators of social development to have a better idea of Barbados current social background and the reasons that have led to this condition.

According to the 2010 Human Development Report issued by the UN, Barbados' Human Development Index (HDI) was 0.793 in 2011, ranking the island 47th out of 187 countries with comparable data (UNDP, 2011). This high-ranking HDI does not only put the island ahead of several European nations including Spain, Greece and Italy, but also above the Caribbean and Latin America's HDI regional average of 0.706 (UNDP, 2011). Therefore, Barbados is considered to be a 'developed' rather than a 'developing' island by the UN, being the only Caribbean and Latin American country to be listed amongst the countries with a 'very high' level of human development (UNDP, 2011, BBC, 2012).

**Figure 4.6** *Barbados' HDI in Comparison with Other Regions of the World*



Source: UNDP, 2011

The HDI is a composite indicator that measures three basic dimensions of human development: health, education and income. As explained previously, Barbados HDI is 0.793, ranking in 47<sup>th</sup> place out of 187 countries, having a life expectancy at birth of 74.34 years and a relatively high health index of 0.914 (UNDP, 2011). Regarding the country's income, Barbados is considered by the World Bank as a 'high income' nation with a Gross Domestic Product per capita of US\$21,800 (at PPP) (World Bank, 2011). Moreover, the island's literacy rate was 99.7 % in 2002, a relatively high percentage considering that both the United States and Canada's ratio evolved around 99% in 2003 (Index Mundi, 2011). In fact, Barbados government spends a significant amount of its revenues in education, the latter being compulsory from ages 5 to 16 (Index Mundi, 2011). In 2009, the island spent 6.7% of its total GDP in education, an impressive number considering that certain 'industrialized' nations such as the United States and Britain tend to spend less than 5 percent of their annual revenue in this sector (Gmelch & Bohn, 1997).

However, although up until now the different social indicators have portrayed a positive image of the island, it is important to mention that minimum wage in Barbados is only BDS\$ 5 an hour (or US\$ 2.50), with a Gross Annual Wage of US\$8,208 (US Department of State, 2011). This minimum wage is relatively low considering the rather high prices of local commodities, such as electricity and food. For example, during her field work on the island, the researcher noticed that the cost of gas hovered around BDS\$ 3 per litre (or US\$1.50), with local produce, such as tomatoes, costing up to BDS\$ 10 (US\$ 5.00) a pound in local supermarkets (Researcher Observations, 2011). Thus, although Barbados is classified as a 'developed' nation, its current minimum wage barely covers the price of essential commodities, such as food. In fact, the island's inflation rate has increased of 6% since 2003, a rather high percentage considering that the Barbadian economy was highly affected by the recession of 2009 (Index Mundi, 2011). Although the author of this thesis wanted to analyse Barbados GINI index to have a better idea of the actual distribution of income on the island, this information was not found on any of the international websites such as the UN and the World Bank.

The state of transportation in Barbados is relatively good, with most of the country's roads being paved and providing appropriate road signage in the more popular places of the island (Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, 2011). Public transportation is also easily available to both locals and visitors who can travel by using either the Transport Board buses (owned by the Barbadian government) or the privately owned vans and mini-buses; the cost is quite accessible

as well, costing only BD\$2.00 (or US\$1.00) to go anywhere on the island (Bailey, 2011). Barbados' water is also safe to drink from the tap due to the island's unique limestone base which helps purify and cleanse the water (Bailey, 2011). Due to all these different positive factors, Barbados is considered a wealthy and stable Caribbean nation and thus, attracts a fairly high level of migrant inflows every year (particularly from the nation of Guyana) (Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, 2011).

Overall, despite the surprising low minimum wage, the Barbadian community seems to benefit of a stable and 'developed' society. Therefore, it can be easily understandable why Barbados is considered to be a 'developed' nation by both the UN and the World Bank. However, it is still important to keep in mind that, when taking a closer examination, the Barbadian population is still facing several societal challenges that can really affect its overall well-being.

#### **4.3.5 Cultural Background**

The last section of this chapter will focus on Barbados' cultural background. Although this country tends to be considered a relatively 'modern' and 'westernized' society, Barbados' culture has strongly been influenced over the years by its dual heritage: on one hand, its British background, reflected by its language, religion and passion for cricket; on the other hand, its 'African' legacy, revealed in its Caribbean music, food and dancing traditions (Bailey, 2011; Beckles, 1990; Gmelch & Bohn, 1997). The following section will examine both aspects of this heritage to analyse how this island has evolved throughout the years to develop its own cultural identity and become the society that Barbados is today.

Due to the island's history of slavery and 'plantocracy', the 'black' community (or of African descent) embodies the largest ethnic group on the island, representing 93% of the total population in 2002; this figure was followed by 'white' Bajans<sup>12</sup> (3.2%), 'mixed' Bajans<sup>13</sup> (2.6%), and East Indians (1%) (US Department, 2011). Moreover, Barbadians have not only kept English as their official language (having a local dialect with a distinctive 'Bajan' accent), but continues to practice today the Anglican religion, currently representing the largest religious group on the island with approximately 70,000 members (U.S Department of State, 2011). In

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<sup>12</sup> 'White' Bajans refer to citizens or residents of Barbados of European descent (Pattullo, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> 'Mixed' Bajans refer to citizens or residents of Barbados of mixed races.

addition, manners and appropriate behaviour tend to be very important to local Barbadians, with afternoon tea being a ritual for the older generations (Pattullo, 1996).

Despite this strong English heritage, the Barbadian society has developed throughout the years other characteristics unique to its local culture. In fact, this transition started in the early 70s when the Barbadian government asked Edward Brathwaite, a renowned Caribbean poet and author, to conduct a local survey of indigenous and cultural activities. In his final report, Brathwaite stated that Barbados had not really ‘developed any significant cultural institutions since its independence in 1966’ (Beckles, 1990, p.209). Thus, to remedy this situation, the Barbadian government decided to start working on new cultural programs to help uncover and preserve Barbados culture and traditions. As a result, a multitude of ‘theatre workshops, dance and musical groups, professional artists, writers and folklorists, all working within the Afro-dimension of social experience, were created during this time’ (Beckles, 1990, p. 209).

An example of this new transition was the revival in 1974 of an old forgotten festival, *Crop Over*, by the Barbados Tourism Board and the Ministry of Education and Culture (Beckles, 1990). Although at its inception in 1688, this festival was used to celebrate the annual end of the sugar cane season, *Crop Over* was reintroduced by the local authorities as a national celebration aiming to promote tourism to the island during the slow summer season (Bailey, 2011). This ‘revived’ tradition has become over the years a popular national holiday, with different activities being organized during the months of June, July and August, including open-air concerts, local markets, and steel pan shows. During these festivities, both tourists and locals can enjoy Barbados unique traditional customs, music (such as soca, reggae and calypso) and delicious cuisine, including flying fish, half pie (more commonly referred to as macaroni pie) and coucou (a recipe made with corn meal, okra and flying fish) (Bailey, 2011).

**Figure 4.7** *Crop Over Kadooment (Main Parade)*



**Source:** "Crop Over festival," 2012

It is also important to note that Barbados' colonial legacy tends to influence the current interactions between the visitors to the island and its local population. In fact, Pattullo (1996) explains how tourism can potentially reinforce prejudices of race and social class due to the often different demographical characteristics of both hosts and guests. This is particularly the case in ex-colonial societies such as Barbados, where problems of race and ethnicity are still sensitive issues for the local population, with 'white' visitors 'becoming associated with whatever exploitative relationship that tourism as an industry engenders' (Pattullo, 1996, p. 123). Since Barbadian residents, predominantly of African descent, need to cater to visitors, mainly ancestors of the former colonialists, certain residents have difficulty dissociating 'service' with 'servitude', developing over the years harsh feelings towards these tourists (Pattullo, 1996). These attitudes can further be fuelled by several local hotels and restaurants often refusing access to their premises to local Barbadians (Gmelch & Bohn, 1997).

This tendency for tourism to exacerbate tensions between hosts and guests can also be observed when examining the different perceptions that both groups have of the term 'harassment'. A Visitor Satisfaction Survey conducted by the local authorities in 1994 described how 59% of tourists visiting Barbados reported experiencing some type of harassment during their stay, either by persistent beach vendors (80%), Barbadians selling drugs (27%), verbal abuse (14%), sexual harassment (8%), and/or physical abuse (2%) (Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001, p.490). To pinpoint the reasons of this harassment, Albuquerque & McElroy (2001)

decided to conduct semi-structured interviews amongst the local population. After interviewing taxi drivers, local merchants, and beach vendors, the researchers found that the perception of 'harassment' was a matter of definition and interpretation on the part of both hosts and guests. In fact, several beach vendors explained during the interviews that they did not perceive their actions to be of 'harassing nature', but rather that they needed to be aggressive in order to be able to make a sale or 'get a girl' (Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001, p. 491). An interviewee further described this attitude as just being 'part of the culture of salesmanship in the Caribbean where it is normal to call out loudly to potential customers, extol the virtues of one's product, and follow potential customers if need be' (Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001, p. 488).

Following the results of this Visitor Satisfaction Survey, the BHTA recommended a number of measures to help reduce the levels of harassment towards tourists. Some of these recommendations included the deployment of additional beach wardens on the most popular beaches; the reinforcement of stricter rules towards unlicensed vendors; and finally, the criminalization of harassment by Barbadian authorities –an approach that never ended up being implemented (Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001). The execution of some of these measures helped decrease levels of harassment on the island, the rate passing from 65% in the early 1990s to 54% in 2000. However, these measures were perceived as controversial by the local population since some of these rules imposed bureaucratic hardships on many lower income residents that were trying to make a living (specially for unlicensed vendors), and arouse legal and constitutional issues specially involving the debate around the criminalization of harassment (Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001). In fact, these measures only exacerbated some of the already existent tensions and harsh feelings that certain members of the local population had towards the tourists.

Despite some of the tensions previously described, Barbados society still remains highly dependent on tourism. Visitors from all over the world come every year to enjoy the island's beautiful beaches and discover its unique cultural background. Although Barbados culture has been evolving since the country gained its independence in 1966, the local community is still today continuing to define its identity after years of British rule. However, as described in this section, Barbados has unique cuisine, food and cultural traditions that have become important components of its modern society and tourism product. In the case of certification programs, it is important to properly understand this cultural background since it can potentially help pinpoint

and further understand some of the limitations that tourism businesses can face when adhering to Green Globe indicators.

#### **4.3.6 Summary**

The information presented in this chapter provides a general idea of where Barbados stands today, both as a nation and a popular tourism destination. Moreover, it is important to keep these details in mind when considering how Green Globe's criteria and indicators apply to the case of Barbados, since this examination can help explain some of the challenges that tourism businesses can face when implementing certain indicators. The next chapter of this thesis will provide the different results of the research that was conducted on the island during the summer of 2011.



## **5.0 Findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers a comprehensive analysis of the evidence collected through both the semi-structured interviews and observations of the researcher while in Barbados. After outlining the principal demographic characteristics of the respondents, this chapter presents the main themes that have emerged from the coding and analysis of all the gathered information. The first theme describes how respondents define and perceive both ecotourism and sustainable tourism. The second theme focuses on the potential role that hotels have towards host communities. The third theme discusses the different societal concerns that are currently occurring in Barbados. And finally, the last theme takes a closer examination at Green Globe, its current practices, potential advantages and possible limitations.

### **5.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

As explained previously, the first section of this chapter will outline the main demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in this research, in order to have a better idea of who was involved in this study. A total of 44 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with participants being divided into three main sub-groups: 8 hotel employees, 11 tourism professionals and 25 community members. The overall sample was comprised of 28 (64%) females and 16 (36%) males<sup>14</sup>. Most respondents (80%) were originally from Barbados, with only 9 (20%) being expatriates<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, 34% of participants were aged 52 years and over, being the most represented group in the overall sample. Table 5.1 provides further details on the distribution of both the age categories and gender of the 44 respondents.

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<sup>14</sup> The majority of hotel employees and tourism professionals that the researcher interviewed happened to be female. For community members, the researcher felt more comfortable interviewing women since male interviewees tended to turn the interviews into a 'flirting' conversation making the researcher uncomfortable at times.

<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'expatriate' will refer to a person permanently residing in a country other than that of the person's upbringing.

**Table 5.1** *Detailed Age Groupings of Overall Sample by Sex*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Total Number of respondents</b>	<b>Number of Male Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Female Respondents</b>
18-25	1 (0.02%)	1 (2.2%)	-
26-35	9 (21.4%)	2 (4.5%)	7 (15.9%)
36-44	11 (25%)	6 (13.6%)	5 (11.4%)
45-51	8 (18.2%)	2 (4.5%)	6 (13.6%)
52 plus	15 (34%)	5 (11.4%)	10 (22.7%)

For the purposes of this thesis, tourism professionals were considered to be any person who was either directly or indirectly involved in the tourism sector, its promotion and/or overall development. This sub-group belonged to several government, tourism and non-for-profit organisations, and was mostly comprised of females (91%), with only 1 male respondent (9%).

Moreover, the researcher considered a ‘hotel employee’ to be any person who was directly employed by a hotel or a resort, regardless of their involvement in Green Globe’s certification process. Out of the ten Green Globe certified hotels that are located in Barbados, a total of eight hotel employees from seven different establishments agreed to participate in the study. It is important to mention that one of the interviewees was in charge of two certified hotels: the Red Mahogany and the Blue Reef Hotel. Although the researcher tried to meet with staff from both hotels separately, this respondent was not inclined to let her interview someone from each establishment, assuring her that his answers applied to both properties. Moreover, the author was able to meet with two employees at both The Easterly and the Blue Flying Fish.

Out of these eight hotel employees, 6 (75%) respondents were female, with only 2 (25%) male participants. The age category varied, with the largest cluster of interviewees aged between 45 and 51 years old (37.5%). The respondents occupied different professions, including one hotel owner, one Assistant Manager, two General Managers, three Environmental Officers and one gardener. Although everyone was familiar with Green Globe and its practices, it is important to keep in mind that two respondents were not directly involved in the certification and its implementation process. Moreover, out of the three Environmental Officers interviewed, only one participant occupied this position on a full time basis. In fact, the other two officers were

simply volunteering their time, having other full time responsibilities either as a social coordinator or a manager.

The largest sub-group of this study involved community members from five different communities located in the South Coast of Barbados. After using the snowball technique to select respondents, a total of 25 community members were interviewed: 3 (12%) from Carlisle Bay, 7 (28%) from Oistins, 8 (32%) from Bridgetown, 4 (16%) from St Lawrence Gap and 3 (12%) from Rockley. This respondent sub-group had a total of 12 (48%) males and 13 (52%) females. The age category varied, with the largest cluster of interviewees aged 52 years old and over (40%).

After highlighting the general demographic characteristics of the respondents of this study, the subsequent sections will discuss the qualitative results gathered during the researcher's field work in Barbados.

### **5.3 Qualitative Results**

The following section focuses on summarizing the evidence collected through both the semi-structured interviews and observations of the researcher. This information is presented according to the four main themes that emerged after the coding and analysis of the data: 1) definition and perceptions of ecotourism and sustainable tourism; 2) potential roles that hotels should have towards host communities; 3) different societal concerns that are currently occurring in Barbados, and 4) Green Globe, its current practices, potential advantages and limitations.

#### **5.3.1 Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism**

As described in Chapter Two, the current lack of widely-accepted international definitions of key concepts such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism has led to the proliferation of certification and ecolabelling programs all working with their own interpretation and definition of these terms (Mycoo, 2006, Buckley, 2002). Therefore, the researcher was interested in learning how the three respondent sub-groups perceived and/or defined these terms since this information can potentially help have a better understanding of Green Globe's current practices and limitations. To achieve this goal, respondents were asked to provide their personal definition of both ecotourism and sustainable tourism. The following sub-sections will summarize the

different answers collected, dividing the information per respondent sub-group as each sub-group has distinct backgrounds and perhaps, different levels of knowledge on these concepts.

#### **5.3.1.1 Tourism Professionals**

Due to time restrictions, only four participants were asked to define the term ecotourism. Their definitions had similarities, with all answers having a strong ‘green’ and ‘environmental’ inclination. Although the wording varied, the respondents tended to define ecotourism as a form of tourism that is less impactful on the environment and where natural resources are at the centre of the tourism product. Two interviewees even mentioned that for them, the island of Dominica represented a perfect example of ecotourism, since this country tends to be very green-oriented, using its natural resources as a base for its tourism product (Tourism professional 1 & 2).

I associate ecotourism with Dominica because the island is still very green, and hotels and other green buildings are integrated into the nature and the island’s culture: they fit in their natural landscape. Plus, they use their natural and cultural resources to create their tourism product. There is a lot of hiking, hot springs... (Tourism professional 1)

Ecotourism is tourism where the natural environment is the main product. When I think of ecotourism, I think of the island of Dominica. I don't think of beaches and sand when I think of ecotourism, but of hikes, waterfalls, green scenery. (Tourism professional 2)

In fact, after staying two months in Barbados, the researcher concluded that the island does not have many ecotourism products and/or initiatives.

The same tourism professionals were also asked to define sustainable tourism. Once again, all respondents had a strong ‘green’ perception of this concept, with only one interviewee discussing the socio-cultural component of sustainable tourism. The most comprehensive definition described sustainable tourism as ‘a form of tourism that can take place into the future, that it is enjoyed by all and future generations because the survival of resources depends on minimising our current impact on the environment’ (Tourism professional 3). Another respondent stated that, for her, sustainable tourism tends to be a rather opposing concept,

I find these two terms contradictory as tourism by principle is destructive: you need to fly to go to places and that is really bad for the environment. I personally think that the environment needs to be protected from tourists, but I understand the idea: to travel in such a way as to minimize the impacts on environment. (Tourism professional 2)

Moreover, during one of the interviews, a tourism professional commented that, from his perspective, the problem with sustainability and sustainable tourism was that it tends to represent 'everything and anything at the same time - everyone works under their own idea of sustainability' (Tourism professional 4). Although it was difficult for him to provide an exact definition of this term, he explained that he associated sustainable tourism with Harrison's Cave<sup>16</sup>, a local tourist attraction whose manager is always aiming to implement green modes of operations, while also involving the local community as much as possible.

Harrison's cave is a good example of sustainability. The manager is really big into sustainability and really wants to involve the local community in the project. Today, they are trying to get electrical carts for their grounds. The gullies and the caves in Harrison's Caves are all connected, it is all one whole connected ecosystem, that is really tied to the local community. (Tourism professional 4)

In fact, according to this tourism professional, the manager of Harrison's Cave established a local newsletter, *De Heart Uh Barbados*, in order to inform the surrounding community of the latest and future initiatives of the organisation. This case is an appropriate example of sustainable tourism, since it incorporates both environmental and socio-cultural components that correspond to the newer definitions of this term (Mycoo, 2006; UNWTO, 2004).

#### **5.3.1.2 Hotel Employees**

Due to time restrictions, only three hotel employees were asked to define ecotourism. Interestingly enough, although these three interviewees were directly involved with Green Globe and the overall certification process, they were only able to provide a vague description of this term, describing ecotourism as a form of tourism that aims to protect the environment. According to one of the hotel employees, this situation can be attributed to the fact that ecotourism is not very popular on the island, with most tourists simply being interested in enjoying Barbados' warm weather and beautiful beaches (Hotel employee 1).

The same three hotel employees were asked to provide their personal definition of sustainable tourism. Once again, the answers were rather vague, generally describing it as a form of tourism that helps protect the environment. One hotel employee was not even able to provide a definition,

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<sup>16</sup> Located in Barbados, Harrison's cave is a local attraction that offers a 'guided tour of a massive underground cave stream system, with awesome caverns and breathtaking formations' (Harrison's Cave, 2007).

I never really got involved with this. There are so many different organisations out there, all doing the same thing that it gets very confusing. For me, sustainable tourism is similar to Green Globe, it is doing the same thing. (Hotel employee 2)

Thus, it is surprising to note that these three hotel employees, directly involved with Green Globe and its practices, were not able to demonstrate a more comprehensive understanding of ecotourism and sustainable tourism, key terms to properly understand and achieve certification.

### **5.3.1.3 Community Members**

Since community members tended to have more time for the researcher, a total of 23 out of 25 respondents were asked to provide their personal definitions of both ecotourism and sustainable tourism<sup>17</sup>. In the case of ecotourism, 14 participants had heard of this term before, with only six locals being able to provide general definitions for this concept. Once again, community members focused on the ‘green’ and ‘environmental’ side of ecotourism, making comments such as: ‘For me, it has to do with marine biology, saving the environment, protecting the reefs and helping preserve them. It has to do with nature and environment’ (Community member 5); ‘When tourism and environment are in harmony with programs, policies, development’ (Community member 8) and; ‘It means the protection of the environment such as beaches, reefs’ (Community member 14).

The most comprehensive definition described ecotourism as ‘a sustainable and eco-friendly approach to tourism. Some constructions are currently damaging the environment and an ecotourism approach would help prevent and contain environmental destruction’ (Community member 1). However, this definition focuses once again on the environmental side of ecotourism and does not include socio-cultural components to it.

It is also important to mention that similar to tourism professionals, one community member did not consider Barbados to have ecotourism products compared to islands such as Dominica and St Lucia.

You chose the wrong island to come look at ecotourism. You should have chosen Dominica or St Lucia as Barbados is only sea, sun, sand. It has nothing to offer on the ecotourism side. Barbados has no culture, it is too Americanized. Tourists just come here for the sunny weather and nice beaches. (Community member 2)

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<sup>17</sup> The two other community members were rather busy and only had ten minutes for the researcher. Thus, the researcher did not have the chance to ask them to define ecotourism and sustainable tourism.

This statement was surprising as although Barbados is a rather developed country, the island still has a vivid culture, offering unique food, music and British cultural heritage.

Respondents seemed more familiar with the term sustainable tourism, and a total of 14 community members were able to provide general definitions of this term. The responses varied, with the most comprehensive definition describing sustainable tourism to be ‘very similar to ecotourism. It is a combined approach of environment and economic development that will help protect Barbados’ (Community member 8). Although this description has both environmental and economic components to it, this definition still does not include socio-cultural components.

A few respondents simply mentioned that sustainable tourism is ‘positive for the island’ since it will help protect Barbados for future generations: ‘Tourism that sustains itself, that is positive for the island because it does not destroy the destination’ (Community member 14) and; ‘Tourism that protects the destination, that is good for the community and the future generations’ (Community member 15). Other locals described sustainable tourism as a form of tourism that helps protect the island’s local environment and natural resources: ‘It is important for Barbados to have sustainable tourism to help protect our resources’ (Community member 15) and; ‘For me, it is tourism that protects the environment, so it is good for the island’ (Community member 17). Once again, these last definitions are very green oriented.

Therefore, as shown by the several quotes presented in this section, community members also appear to have a strong environmental focus when defining both ecotourism and sustainable tourism.

### **5.3.2 Responsibility of Hotels towards Local Communities**

The researcher was also interested in examining how the three respondent sub-groups perceived the role that the accommodation sector should play towards host communities from an environmental, social and cultural perspective. This information can help uncover some of the reasons hotels decided to become certified in the first place, while potentially helping explain why certain establishments tend to meet Green Globe’s criteria more compared to others. Thus, all 44 respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on: 1) the impact that hotels have had on the general well-being of the Barbadian community; 2) the responsibility that hotels have towards the conservation of natural resources on the island; 3) the potential role of hotels in helping the local community, and; 4) and hotel’s role in promoting local culture.

All participants were asked to provide their opinion on the impact (either negative or positive) that hotels have had up until now on the Barbadian community. The answers varied, with the majority of respondents having mixed feelings on the matter. From a negative perspective, a couple of interviewees mentioned that hotels are responsible for some of Barbados' pollution problems since they tend to create additional waste. A community member even stated that several hotels are built too close to the water and thus, are currently the main cause for beach erosion on the island (Community member 1).

From a social perspective, a common negative impact mentioned by respondents is the tendency for locals to be increasingly prevented from accessing the beach, pushed aside by hotels and their security guards, although the beach is considered a public space in Barbados (Dharmaratne & Brathwaite, 1998).

Most hotels, especially on the West Coast, block beach access to the locals even if the beach is technically a public space. This is a problem because then locals see the hotels and the tourists in a negative way. (Community member 1)

Hotels can sometimes stop people from enjoying the beach. You are spending a nice afternoon with your family, in a beach you've always gone to and out of nowhere, a security guard comes and tells us that we cannot stay on the beach and have to move somewhere else. (Community member 14)

A few respondents even associated this trend to racial discrimination.

On the West Coast there is no more access to the beaches even if they are supposed to be public. Some hotels say its public but they put security guards to intimidate - if you're white, not that affected, but if black, definitely. (Tourism professional 1)

In certain cases, locals are alienated from the beach. Even if the beach is not private, it feels like one - with the chairs, security guards, big constructions. They don't bother tourists, but only black locals. Even white Bajans are not really bothered. (Tourism professional 3)

Furthermore, it was explained by a few respondents that certain hotels tend to 'keep tourists for themselves', especially in the case of all inclusive resorts, and thus, 'money does not go directly into the community as it should' (Community member 6).

On a negative note, certain hotels have all inclusive formulas that are not good for the community as tourists don't come out of the hotels, they stay there all their vacation. This is not good because community does not benefit from those tourists. (Community member 9)



Therefore, these respondents felt that hotels should encourage guests to eat and shop outside the hotel to ensure a more equal distribution of tourism revenues.

Despite some of these negative feelings towards the accommodation sector, most respondents agreed that hotels are still important contributors to Barbados' local economy since they allow tourism to occur. As a community member states, 'Barbados needs the hotels as the island lives of tourism and hotels is where tourists stay when they visit' (Community member 7). Another community member further adds that 'by providing good services, hotels encourage people to come back and repeated clientele is good for the island, especially in these recessionary times' (Community member 8). Moreover, several interviewees mentioned how hotels are an important source of employment, since they provide both direct (hotel employees) and indirect (taxi drivers, electricians) jobs for the local community. However, it is important to note that although employment is generally perceived as a positive impact, a couple of community members also considered that hotel jobs tend to be 'low-paying jobs and not always very rewarding' (Community member 5).

#### **5.3.2.1 Hotels and the Protection of the Local Environment**

Interviewees were asked to provide their opinion on the role that hotels should play in protecting the local environment. All respondents agreed that hotels should implement environmental programs: 'it should be their first priority as hotels play a huge role in tourism' (Community member 6). Several respondents, especially hotel employees, provided practical reasons justifying the importance of adopting 'greener' practices and/or modes of operation. In fact, several interviewees acknowledged that Barbados' natural environment is the base of the island's tourism product and thus, needs to stay as pristine as possible in order to keep attracting tourists. As a hotel employee explains,

If beaches are polluted, it is not only not good for the environment, but also not good for tourism. Tourists don't come here to enjoy a dump; they come here for a nice beach. If beaches are eroded, that means less beach, so less tourism. (Hotel employee 5)

While this answer shows a rather practical motivation to conserve the environment, a couple of tourism professionals had interesting perspectives explaining why hotels should implement environmental modes of operation. In their opinion, hotels do not only have the responsibility to

implement environmental practices, but also need to help educate tourists on the consequences that their actions can have on the destination.

Tourists don't need to have fresh towels every day, or the linens changed every day, or always serve drinks in disposable cups. They need to realize the consequences that their acts can have on the island and hotels should help inform them. (Tourism professional 1)

Tourists tend to relax when they are on vacation and they don't pay attention to the destination. So, the hotels have the responsibility to educate them so they are more aware of their impacts on environment. Awareness is important, so they (tourists) take some responsibility; they need to be educated so they are more aware of their impacts on the environment. (Tourism professional 2)

Therefore, these tourism professionals do not only put the onus on the hotels and its employees to help protect the local environment, but also on the tourists that visit Barbados.

During these interviews, respondents were asked to provide concrete examples of environmental actions and/or programs that hotels could implement (or have implemented) to help protect the local environment. Several examples were provided, and were divided in five main categories: education, recycling and reusing, energy and water consumption, volunteering and hotel's overall modes of operation:

*On education* (HE<sup>18</sup> N=3, CM<sup>19</sup> N=2, TP<sup>20</sup> N=2)

- Help educate people on the importance of recycling and other 'green' initiatives
- Regular staff training on sound environmental practices
- Include an 'Environmental Section' in room binders that informs guests of green initiatives and programs

*On recycling and reusing* (HE N=2, CM N=9, TP N=8)

- Establish a recycling program in hotel premises
- Provide reusable plates and glasses to their employees
- Recycle all newspapers
- Recycle ink cartages
- Recycle and refurbish old furniture
- Provide 'in-room signs' asking guests to leave towels on the rack if they do not want them change daily
- Composting

*On energy and water consumption* (HE N=4, CM N=1, TP=10)

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<sup>18</sup> In this case, HE refers to 'hotel employees'.

<sup>19</sup> In this case, CM refers to 'community members'.

<sup>20</sup> In this case, TP refers to 'tourism professionals'.

- Training employees to turn off the lights when no one is in the room
- Monitor energy and water consumption and set-up annual goals to reduce both
- Provide ‘in-room signs’ asking guests to turn off the lights if they leave the room
- Smaller toilet bowls to reduce the amount of water used and wasted when flushing
- Collect and use rain water for toilet flushing purposes
- Install magic eye for A/C (if no one is in the room, A/C goes off automatically)
- Install solar panels and use solar lighting as source of electricity

*Regarding surrounding environment* (HE N=0, CM=15, TP=2)

- Help plant trees and gardens on the island
- Help with annual beach clean-up organized by the Barbadian Government and the Future Trust Centre (FTC)
- Volunteer and give donations to environmental programs such as the Barbados Sea Turtle Project<sup>21</sup>
- Avoid building too close to the beach since it can cause beach erosion

*On modes of operation* (HE N=5, CM=0, TP N=1)

- Ensure that hotel suppliers are environmentally friendly. If not, either push for suppliers to change their practices or simply change to another provider
- Use eco-friendly products in the hotel’s daily operations (cleaning products, light bulbs, toilet paper)
- Have a ‘Green Team’ to supervise implementation of ‘green’ initiatives

It is important to note that out of all these actions, the largest concern discussed by several respondents (N=11), especially community members (N=7), was the necessity for hotel employees to establish recycling practices in their premises since ‘it is important to reduce waste in Barbados because it is a small island’ (Community member 18).

After recycling, several respondents (N=10) also considered important for hotels employees to participate in the annual beach clean-up organized by the Barbadian government and the Future Trust Centre (FTC). The general consensus appeared to be that cleaning beaches will not only ‘help continue attracting tourists for years to come, but also help keep the nation healthy for its local residents’ (Tourism professional 4).

### **5.3.2.2 Hotels and the Local Community**

Interviewees were asked to provide their opinion on the role that hotels could potentially play in helping the local community. Out of the 44 respondents, only one hotel employee and one

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<sup>21</sup> Barbados Sea Turtle Project’s mission is ‘to recover marine turtle populations through the use of scientifically-sound conservation measures and monitoring programmes, and through the development and implementation of training, education and public awareness tools and activities that encourage the support and active participation of stakeholders’ (Barbados Sea Turtles, 2010).

community member did not feel that hotels should have the responsibility to help. The remaining 42 participants agreed that the accommodation sector should be socially involved since ‘they have the resources and money to do it’ (Community member 7). Moreover, a few respondents emphasized the importance of ‘everyone helping each other’ since this approach will help ‘make the island better for future generations’ (Hotel employee 1 & 3).

From a practical perspective, six community members explained how the hotel’s image tends to improve when the establishment and its employees are involved in community projects. By projecting an overall positive image, there is a higher chance for locals and/or visiting friends to choose staying in such socially sensible properties.

If hotels help the community, they will be seen on a positive light by the locals, and then they might even end up staying at their property, or encourage their friends and family to stay there. The better the image that the hotel has in the community, the greater the business will be. So, it just makes sense for them to help. (Community member 3)

Therefore, adopting social and cultural practices can provide hotels with interesting marketing advantages, potentially attracting more guests to their premises. A tourism professional further recounted how The Travel Foundation<sup>22</sup> paid a consultant agency (Travelwatch) a few years ago to conduct a study regarding the social role that hotels could and should play in helping host communities (Tourism professional 5). The results of this survey demonstrated that customers considered it important to stay at hotels where employees were well treated, and that had good social repercussions on the host destination (Travelwatch, 2006). Therefore, helping the surrounding community cannot only improve the general well-being of locals but could also provide interesting marketing advantages for the hotels.

Another tourism professional explained during her interview how it can sometimes be ‘difficult to give a dollar value or percentage on the socio-cultural contributions of hotels as social actions can have several variations’ (Tourism professional 6). However, despite this difficulty in quantifying such actions, ‘it does not mean they are not achieving the requirement’

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<sup>22</sup> Founded in 2003, The Travel Foundation is an ‘independent UK charity which helps the travel industry understand, manage and take effective action on sustainable tourism’ (The Travel Foundation, 2012).

(Tourism professional 6). In fact, all respondents were asked to provide examples of programs and/or actions that have been applied or that could be undertaken by hotel employees in order to help the surrounding communities. The following actions were provided, divided in four main categories: employment, donations and sponsorships, volunteering and encouraging entrepreneurship.

*Employment* (HE N=2, CM N=10, TP N=2)

- Hire local people
- Provide employees and their families with special discounts
- Organize special lunches and dinners for local residents
- Provide work placements for tourism students
- Provide good salaries to their employees

*Donations and sponsorships* (HE N=9, CM N=2, TP N=9)

- Sponsor youth programs and local child clubs
- Ritz Carlton and Hilton in Jamaica: these hotels sponsored a Foster Care Village (babysitting services when parents are too busy)
- Food donations
- Room donations
- Support fundraisers by giving money or room nights
- Money donations
- Donate old furniture instead of throwing it away

*Volunteering* (HE N=4, CM N=5, TP N=5)

- Organize employees to go volunteer in the local community
- Participate in the 'Adopt a school' program<sup>23</sup>

*Encourage entrepreneurship* (HE N=1, CM N=8, TP N=3)

- In Jamaica, Sandals Resort helped develop honey farms and this resort now buys products directly from them
- Encourage local businesses and entrepreneurs by using mostly local products (jobs, food, furniture)
- Encourage tourists to buy from local entrepreneurs
- Invite artists to sell products in hotel premises

According to the findings of this study, community members appeared to be quite concerned with the necessity for hotels to create local employment (N=6). A respondent even added that it is not only about creating employment, but most importantly about offering good salaries to the employees.

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<sup>23</sup> A program that allows hotels to provide financial and/or human support to a local school (BHTA, 2011).

Gas has doubled price since last year. With the prices of oil going up, it increases the price of local commodities because so many things have to be imported. Fruit and vegetables are so expensive. Despite the fact that living on the island is so expensive, minimum wage is only BDS\$ 5 an hour. So hotels need to provide jobs, but good jobs, with good salaries that will help locals survive. (Community member 7)

In fact, during her stay in Barbados, the researcher was surprised to find out how expensive Barbados' cost of living was compared to other popular tourist destinations such as Cancun.

Moreover, several respondents also mentioned the importance for hoteliers to encourage local entrepreneurs by purchasing local products from them, while also sending tourists to visit their businesses (N=8). According to a tourism professional, this approach will help 'distribute the money across the island, making sure that as many people as possible benefit from tourism revenues' (Tourism professional 5).

Hotels should encourage as much as possible the local experience by buying products from small local businesses and manufacturers such as food, meals, arts...instead of always importing food and other things that end up taking away from the local economy. (Community member 1)

By taking this approach, the Barbadian government would not help improve the local economy, but also help decrease the island's dependence on imported goods.

#### **5.3.2.3 Hotels and the Promotion of Local Culture**

When participants were asked to provide their opinion regarding the role that hotels should play in the promotion of local culture, 41 respondents agreed that hotels ought to help promote local culture. In fact, 24 of these respondents believed that culture is one of the principal reasons tourists come to visit Barbados and therefore, it would be advantageous for hotels to promote local attractions and/or festivals.

Very often, visitors want to experience the local life. This should be within the hotel sector as well. People come here because they are interested in learning how people live here, where they are coming from. So hotels should educate tourists on this. (Community member 7)

Many tourists tell me that they travel to Barbados to experience something different and something new, that is not the same as what they have back at home. So to please tourists, hotels should help promote our local food and culture. (Community member 16)

Moreover, two other participants explained how hotel employees can use their position to support local culture since they can ‘be a good source of information for visitors’ (Community member 3). As a tourism professional adds, ‘hotels have a direct opportunity to promote it (culture) as tourists refer to hotels about the different activities there is to do on the island’ (Tourism professional 2). Therefore, hotels have the power to play an important role in the promotion of local culture amongst tourists.

Only three respondents did not believe that hotels should assist in the promotion of local culture, including two community members and one hotel employee.

I don’t think that hotels should impose this (local culture) on people if that is not what they are looking for. I don’t personally like all-inclusives, but that is a personal feeling. It does not mean I would do that, but some customers might not feel the same way that me, so they (tourists) cannot be forced. You can promote it, but you cannot force it. (Hotel employee 7)

This perspective is interesting since it is perhaps correct to assume that hoteliers need to satisfy the needs and demands of their guests in order for the latter to have a positive experience in their property. Therefore, although the promotion of local culture is important, it is also key for hotel employees to understand what their guests want and adapt to those needs as much as possible to secure repetitive clientele.

It is interesting to note that a few respondents acknowledged the necessity for Barbados to develop and expand new niche markets, such as cultural tourism, in order for the island to stay competitive in today’s market. A tourism professional explains how tourists are increasingly seeking for something different from the typical ‘sun, sea, sand’ formula: ‘The new market is not only looking for sun, sea, but for cultural experience as well - so the island needs to start developing more of this because this is what the new market is looking for’ (Tourism professional 1). This view was also shared by a community member that stated, ‘tourists are not looking to see what they have back in their country. They are here because they want to experience something new, new food, culture, people’ (Community member 4). Another community member further commented,

It is logical for hotels to promote local culture: they go hand in hand with each other. Crop Over<sup>24</sup> brings tourists to the island, who stay at the different hotels.

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<sup>24</sup> A ‘revived’ tradition that has become over the years a popular national holiday offering different activities during the months of May, June and August, including open-air concerts, local markets, and steel pan shows (Bailey, 2011).

Hotels and culture are interrelated, and should work together, in harmony.  
(Community member 11)

Therefore, promoting local culture can be a good marketing strategy for hotels as ‘by providing a good experience to tourists, they will come back to the island’ (Community member 10).

Once again, respondents were asked to provide a few examples of actions and/or projects that hoteliers could take -or have undertaken- to help promote local culture. The following examples were provided, divided in four main categories: food, festivals, music and art.

*Food* (HE N=0, CM N=6, TP N=2)

- Incorporate more local dishes in their restaurants’ menus
- Encourage guests to eat at local restaurants that offer traditional Barbadian food
- Encourage guests to visit local farmers’ markets

*Festivals* (HE N=3, CM N=19, TP N=3)

- Promote and encourage guests to experience local culture (e.g. Oistins fish market)
- Promote Crop Over and its different weekly activities
- During weekly ‘Manager’s Cocktail Parties’<sup>25</sup>, inform guests of different cultural activities happening on the island

*Music* (HE N=3, CM N=4, TP N=2)

- Invite local singers to hotel premises
- Invite drumming, calypso and tuck bands to hotel premises
- Play Caribbean music in the lobby and elevators

*Art* (HE N=4, CM N=4, TP N=3)

- Encourage more local vendors and artisans to come display and sell their crafts in hotel premises
- Use local art, paintings and frames in hotel’s decor
- Support and invest in cultural and heritage projects (E.g. Historic Garrison Project)

Out of these different actions, encouraging the guests to experience local culture (N=14) and the promotion of Crop Over and its different activities (N=10), were the examples the most provided by the respondents, especially by community members.

At first, hotels were not really promoting Oistins Fish Market. They wanted to keep clients in their premises, you know, like the ‘all inclusive’ formulas. But tourists were still coming to Oistins. And with more and more tourists coming, hotels soon realized that they should include Oistins in their activities and itineraries. People want to discover the culture of a place, you know, not only stay at the hotel (Community member 13).

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<sup>25</sup> Once a week, for approximately two hours, several hotels would offer drinks and snacks to their guests. Managers would be present to greet and meet these customers, and thank them for staying in their property.



In fact, the researcher went to Oistins Fish Market at several occasions, on both Friday and Saturday nights, and she noticed that a large number of tourists from all over the island would come to this weekly event and enjoy traditional Barbadian food, music and art.

It was interesting to note that no respondents mentioned other aspects of the local culture, such as dance, cricket and/or religion. During one of the interviews, a community member commented that Barbados was an island with no culture and that has become too Americanized over the years (Community member 2). Although this statement might not apply in every case, it can still perhaps partially explain why other aspects of local culture were not mentioned during the interviews.

## **5.4 Local Issues**

The researcher also sought to understand some of the societal issues that the Barbadian community is currently facing, since this examination can help: 1) determine to what extent Green Globe and its criteria apply to the destination, and; 2) potentially provide ideas of actions, programs and projects that hotel employees could undertake to help the local community while achieving the required Green Globe criteria.

Due to time restrictions during the interviews with the hotel employees, only tourism professionals and community members were asked to name three local issues, not necessarily related to tourism, that they considered important for the Barbadian government to address as soon as possible. The respondents were provided with a list of 15 issues, with the possibility of naming any others if necessary. It is important to note that certain respondents were only able to mention one or two problems, even if asked to provide more. The following section will discuss the different answers provided by the respondents divided in two main categories: environmental perspective and the socio-cultural perspective.

### **5.4.1 From an Environmental Perspective**

Several respondents commented on the importance for local authorities, hotels and tourism stakeholders to help protect the local environment from air, water and soil pollution. In fact, the researcher was surprised to learn that establishing garbage bins and recycling programs throughout the island appeared to be a rather important issue for local residents.

The island needs recycling programs, better recycling programs. You can bring your bottles and get some money back. However, there is no place to put it. You have to keep them somewhere at home, and bring it or call the recycling company. They also tried to implement green bags. They were selling them down at the grocery store, but one day I went and they were not doing it anymore. They were quite expensive: BDS\$ 5! I guess when minimum wage is the same, why would people buy them? So something needs to be done. (Community member 7)

This situation can potentially be attributed to the strong recycling movement currently happening in Barbados. In fact, during her field work on the island, the researcher noted that recycling and its advantages were often promoted in the local evening news, newspaper articles and on several billboards throughout the island<sup>26</sup>.

On another note, despite the clear interest from the part of the local community to help protect natural resources on the island, it was interesting to note that no one seemed to consider it important to establish programs to help protect Barbados' natural reserves and other natural sensitive areas.

#### **5.4.2 From a Social and Cultural Perspective**

An important social issue consistently reported by several respondents related to the importance of creating employment opportunities for local residents. In fact, respondents explained to the researcher how times were presently hard for the local population due to the global recession that negatively impacted the number of tourist arrivals to the island.

Creating employment for local residents is an important one. It is difficult to get a job right now. Times are hard with the recession and stuff and less tourism than before. So, hotels and the government need to help create jobs for us. We need to be able to survive! (Community member 21, emphasis added)

However, a few respondents emphasized the necessity for the Barbadian minimum wage to increase since the cost of living on the island is rather high and thus, it becomes difficult to maintain decent living standards (Community member 3, 8 & 19).

Respondents also discussed that due to these recessive times, it was important for hotels and other tourist attractions to support local entrepreneurs by encouraging tourists to buy local

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<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, the researcher does not have pictures available supporting this evidence since the latter were part of the pictures that were deleted by accident a few days before leaving the island (see section 3.9 for further details).

products and services as much as possible from them since this approach would help improve Barbados' local economy.

It is important to support entrepreneurship as the job market is difficult right now and some entrepreneurs need a hand to succeed in this market. Locals need to be more self-employed instead of relying on government or other companies. Our government should encourage and give incentives to smaller businesses and entrepreneurs so instead of working for people they can work for themselves. (Community member 4)

It is super important, especially right now that the island has less tourism, to tell tourists to visit local vendors like me and buy from us. It will give more money to the economy, not like all inclusive that keep all the money inside. (Community member 18)

Similar to this point, several respondents also commented on the importance to help promote local food and festivals to tourists.

We have a great culture and delicious food. Tourists want to experience this, that's why they come to Barbados. So, we need to encourage tourists to come to Crop Over, Oistins Fish Fry. It will help Bajans vendors and artists make more money. (Community member 4)

This approach will not only help tourists discover local culture, but also encourage entrepreneurship while providing additional income for local artists and vendors.

Another societal concern brought up by a few respondents relates to the necessity to help improve Barbados' agricultural sector. In fact, these respondents explained how this sector currently needs better planning and organisation strategies in order to attain its full potential.

The agricultural sector needs to be improved. It has a lot of potential but it needs a better set-up/ organisation/planning. It needs better exchange of information for better planning. There is this farmer in St Lucy that planted so many onions that he could not sell them all. And he only planted onions, so not good money for him. He needs to learn to diversify. This will help the island import less products from the outside and hotels would be able to encourage Bajan farmers.' (Tourism professional 3)

The Barbadian government would benefit from improving the agricultural sector, since it would not only help provide additional income for local farmers, but also decrease the island's dependency on the importation of certain products, such as fruit, vegetables and meat.

Several respondents also commented on the necessity for local authorities to provide more youth educational programs to the community.

I would also say to help young people getting more focused on more activities by creating some youth programs. Not that they are not good, but some are a little bit distracted – so programs would help keep them more focused. (Community member 3)

According to an interviewee, this approach would help ‘keep kids busy so they stay out of trouble’ (Community member 20).

On a similar perspective, a few respondents stated the need to implement programs to fight drug abuse on the island.

There are a lot of drug problems in this community. I mean, there is a crack factory down the road – and this needs to be seriously addressed. There are lot of deeper issues in the community that need to be addressed. (Community member 5).

It is also important to educate tourists on the proper behaviour to have here, on the island, to not buy drugs from our young people, to be careful to not do things that they would not really do back at home. (Community member 13).

In fact, during her stay in Barbados, the researcher and her friends were approached at several occasions by young Barbadians offering different types of drugs (including marijuana, cocaine and crack).

Finally, it was interesting to note that alcoholism was not a problem mentioned by any of the respondents. This finding is surprising since the researcher observed at several occasions, local men spending a lot of time in local bars, being already intoxicated by early afternoon (around 2-3 pm). In fact, alcohol tends to be cheaper than the overall price of food: while a pound of tomatoes costs approximately BDS\$ 10 (US\$ 5), a beer at a local bar costs BDS\$ 3 (US\$ 1.5 US) and bottle of rum (750 ml) costs BDS\$ 18 (US\$ 9) in a grocery store. Moreover, the owner of the house where the researcher stayed during her field work, mentioned at several occasions how alcoholism tends to be a problem on the island. She even advised that if the services of the gardener were needed, to ask him to come in the morning since by early afternoon, he would already be intoxicated. Therefore, it is surprising that alcoholism was not mentioned at all during the semi-structured interviews.

## **5.5 Green Globe**

The next section will concentrate on analysing Green Globe and its overall practices. Different themes will be discussed including: 1) the reasons hotels decided to join this program;

2) the different advantages to being certified; 3) adherence to the Green Globe Standards; 4) challenges to implementing certain indicators, and; 5) the overall criticisms Green Globe is currently facing. Only two community members had heard of Green Globe before, and despite this awareness, they were not able to explain what this program represented. Therefore, the following section will merely focus on the answers provided by both tourism professionals and hotel employees.

### **5.5.1 Reasons for Seeking Certification**

All hotel employees were asked to explain the reasons why their establishments decided to become certified. Several motives were provided, having both altruistic and practical rationales. From an altruistic perspective, all hotel employees seemed sincerely interested in helping preserve the natural environment: ‘I am a proud Bajan and I find important to preserve the island for future generations’ (Hotel employee 3). Another hotel employee declared how important it was for her to build her establishment in harmony with the environment: ‘With this landscaping and beautiful view, it is just natural to want to keep the surroundings green’ (Hotel employee 7). Therefore, this altruistic concern encouraged hotels to become certified because as a respondent explains, ‘being certified has pushed my establishment to be more environmentally friendly’ (Hotel employee 4).

From a practical perspective, three hotel employees explained how their establishments had a general desire to increase their marketing competitiveness. In fact, these hotel employees believed that customers were looking for and expecting to stay in ‘green’ hotels, and thus, needed to respond to this demand.

The hotel has been certified since late 2007. What encouraged the hotel to become certified was the marketing aspect of it, especially at first. Yes, there was some genuine interest on the island, but it was mostly for marketing strategies. (Hotel employee 3)

We had genuine reasons, but marketing reasons as well. More customers are looking for green hotels, that’s what they are expecting. They are looking for non-smoking environments, and clean ones, that provide recycling and eco-friendly products – so it was also to respond to this demand. (Hotel employee 4)

This last respondent further highlighted that by using Green Globe’s logo, customers are aware of the hotel’s initiatives and therefore, would choose their establishment over other ones that are not certified (Hotel employee 4).

The respondents were also asked to provide the motivations that pushed their establishments to choose Green Globe as their certification program. Answers varied, with the Sunny Beach Hotel's respondent stating that 'this organisation is global and catching up all over the world. So it is important to have it' (Hotel employee 1). Moreover, The Easterly's respondent explained how Green Globe appeared to be the best and more affordable option for the hotel industry on the island (Hotel employee 7). For the Blue Flying Fish, the Green Monkey, the Blue Reef and the Red Mahogany, the hotel employees mentioned that they were previously certified with Green Hotel Certification, an organisation that according to the respondents, ended up merging with Green Globe a couple of years ago: 'The hotel has been certified for three years now. The hotel started with Green Certification Hotel and now has fusion with Green Globe. So, the hotel just continued and stayed with Green Globe' (Hotel employees 2). Furthermore, these hotel employees discussed how the CHTA came to their premises and promoted Green Globe as being 'good for the environment', but also as an 'interesting financial opportunity' for them (Hotel employee 2 & 6). Therefore, instead of looking for a new certification program, these four hotels simply decided to continue with Green Globe.

### **5.5.2 Advantages**

Both tourism professionals and hotel employees revealed pertinent information on the benefits that being certified with Green Globe represented. In fact, after the analysis of the different answers provided, three main advantages emerged: 1) important cost savings; 2) interesting 'first' initiative, and; 3) key marketing advantages. The next section will take a closer look at these arguments.

According to three hotel employees, being certified with Green Globe has allowed their hotels to significantly save money with their electricity and water bills. In fact, according to a tourism professional, this is one of the main reasons hotels decide to join certification programs in the first place (Tourism professional 2). A hotel employee even provided approximate numbers of these savings, reporting that last year, the hotel 'saved around US\$ 60 000 in both electricity and water bills, and two years ago, almost US\$ 150 000!' (Hotel employee 4). Therefore, Green Globe can push the accommodation sector to achieve important ongoing cost savings.

Two tourism professionals believed that Green Globe represented a great initiative to convert hotels into ‘greener’ and ‘more responsible’ establishments. For example, a tourism professional explained how Barbados is currently working on projects that would ‘turn the island into a greener economy’ (Tourism professional 4). According to him, certification programs are one step that could help attain this goal. This idea was also shared by three hotel employees who explained how certification gives them a ‘goal to work towards’, with the process having ‘ripple effects’ on the rest of the community since employees ‘can take some of the lessons they have learned at the hotel back home’ (Hotel employee 3 & 5). A good example of these ‘ripple effects’ was provided by an hotel employee who explained that during her training sessions, she asks her employees to bring copies of their water and electricity bills. During these meetings, she takes a look at these bills and provides suggestions on how her employees could potentially reduce their overall energy consumption. She further explains to them that by reducing their energy levels, they are not only saving money but also helping protect the local environment. According to her, her employees tend to apply ‘what they have learned during their training when they go back home, because they now see the more practical side of being environmentally friendly’ (Hotel employee 4).

Five hotel employees also mentioned that Green Globe can provide interesting marketing advantages. In fact, Green Globe’s representative explained how this program allows hotels to increase their competitiveness ‘as more and more clients are green and want green hotels, so certification assists in informing them of the green achievements of hotel’ (Tourism professional 6). However, findings showed that these ‘alleged’ marketing advantages might not be as accurate as often claimed. For example, a tourism professional sceptically stated,

I have not seen any proof showing that being certified increases the number of beds per night per hotel. Tourists right now are looking at price first. Of course, tourists are happy to see when their hotel is green and recycling and stuff, but does not push them to choose that hotel over another. (Tourism professional 3)

Three hotel employees and two other tourism professionals agreed with this point of view, making comments such as: ‘tourists right now are shopping by price and though they like green hotels and certification, it is not a requirement for them’ – and- ‘right now, if the price is right, Green Globe or not, that’s where the client will go’ (Hotel employees 2 & 5).

Six hotel employees have not experienced yet the marketing advantages promoted by Green Globe. The respondent from the Barbados Resort explained that since her hotel became officially certified five years ago, she has not received feedback from the clients (Hotel employee 3).

I have not really seen feedback from them (clients). Actually since 2007, I have received only two letters of customers congratulating the hotel for its green initiatives. This is surprising because it is clearly identified on our website that we are with Green Globe and also on the e-mail signature of the hotel. (Hotel employee 3)

However, although this hotel employee does not think that customers choose her hotel because of its environmental practices, she still thinks that guests expect the property to have green modes of operation (Hotel employee 3).

The hotel employees from the Blue Flying Fish Hotel and The Blue Reef describe a similar situation, reporting that they have not received any feedback from the part of their customers. In fact, a respondent explained that while each room has a questionnaire regarding the hotel's services and products<sup>27</sup>, she has 'never seen a comment about Green Globe or the hotel's green initiatives' (Hotel employee 6).

Interestingly enough, only the hotel employee from the Green Monkey reported that she has seen increased publicity:

Our clients are most definitely aware of our green initiatives and certification. I have students all over the world, just like you, asking me questions regularly about our projects and Green Globe...This certification is making everybody aware of the hotel's green initiatives! (Hotel employee 4, emphasis added)

Therefore, the marketing advantages promoted by Green Globe might not be as accurate as alleged.

### **5.5.3 Green Globe's Sustainability Standard Criteria**

As explained in Chapter Four of this thesis, the Green Globe Standard covers four main categories (sustainable management, socio-economic, environment and culture) and includes a total of 41 sustainability criteria and 337 indicators (Green Globe Website, 2011). Since the researcher was not able to have access to the 337 indicators, she used as reference the 41

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<sup>27</sup> The researcher was not able to take a look at this questionnaire since the interviewees did not have available copies for her. Thus, the researcher cannot say if it included specific questions regarding Green Globe, or if the questions related more to the overall hotel's services and products.



sustainability criteria that were found on Green Globe's website. From this list, she chose 24 criteria that the researcher considered would apply the most to this thesis, based on current literature<sup>28</sup>. During the interviews, the hotel employees were provided with these criteria and were asked to discuss 1) if they were achieving that criterion or not; 2) if yes, to provide examples of how and; 3) to discuss any challenges they had potentially faced during the implementation of such criterion. This approach would help determine any challenges and potential recommendations on how to achieve the different criteria. The following section will discuss these 24 criteria, divided by the four main Green Globe's categories. Appendix E can also be used for further reference.

#### **5.5.3.1 Environmental Criteria**

##### **5.5.3.1.1 The Hotel Purchases Environmentally Friendly Products for Building Materials and Cleaning Operations**

All hotel employees reported using environmentally friendly products for cleaning operations, with three respondents specifying that they bought their products from Nu Barbados<sup>29</sup>. The hotel employee from the Barbados Resort specified that they try to use products that are biodegradable and low in chemicals as much as possible, 'however in certain areas it is difficult as they can need stronger products' (Hotel employee 3).

It is important to note that during her stay at the Sunny Beach Hotel, the researcher observed a few housekeepers using 'regular' cleaning products instead of eco-friendly ones (such as Windex and Chlorox). During an informal conversation with one of the cleaning personnel, the researcher learned that some employees preferred bringing their own cleaning products from home since they did not trust the ones the hotel offered (Community member 22). Therefore, although the respondent of the Sunny Beach Hotel reported that her property only used eco-friendly products, the reality appeared to be a little different after taking a closer look to the everyday cleaning practices.

##### **5.5.3.1.2 Information about the Natural Surroundings is provided to Customers**

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<sup>28</sup> The researcher based this decision on current literature on ecotourism, sustainable tourism, PPT model and certification programs.

<sup>29</sup> A company that aims to 'replace harsh chemicals with unique technology helping create a more sustainable environment and healthier conditions for all Barbadians' (Nu Barbados, 2011).

The respondents of six of the certified hotels reported offering information to their guests about Barbados' natural surroundings by supplying flyers and brochures in the lobby of their hotels, and also by providing information in the room binders located in each of the guests' rooms. One respondent specified that his hotel tended to promote Safari Tours amongst its customers since it 'is a different and fun way to visit the island and learn about its nature' (Hotel employee 2). Two other hotel employees took a different approach to achieve this criterion:

A year ago, I started this project to find the names of all the plants that we have at the hotel and to put labels to them. I worked really hard on this project but it has not been implemented yet. Things can be a bit slow at the hotel sometimes, but I hope to finish it soon. (Hotel employee 3)

Yes, we do. In our beach, there is a place for turtles to lay their eggs. So, we have information in the rooms regarding endangered turtles and to not bother them when they are laying their eggs. There is also information about green monkeys – to not feed them or bother them when there is a mom and the baby because they can be aggressive – so important to be careful. (Hotel employee 4)

Therefore, Green Globe certified hotels appear to be using different approaches to promote the natural surroundings to their customers. Only the respondent from the Sunny Beach Hotel did not report informing tourists on the natural surroundings of the island, explaining that her hotel prefers to promote tourist attractions such as catamaran tours (Hotel employee 1).

#### **5.5.3.1.3 Hotel Uses Local Plants, Flowers and Trees for Landscaping and Restoration**

All hotel employees declared that the different plants, flowers and trees located in the premises of their hotels were either local or regional. The respondent from both the Blue Reef and the Red Mahogany Hotel further specified, 'yes, everything is local. I cannot say indigenous to the island because so many things come from all over, but yes, plants are local' (Hotel employee 2). In fact, Barbados was uninhabited when the island was first discovered by the English settlers and did not have much flora and fauna diversity. It is throughout the years that animals and plants were brought to the island (Pattullo, 1996).

#### **5.5.3.1.4 All Personnel Receive Periodic Training Regarding their Role in Helping Protect the Environment**

All hotel employees reported providing training to their employees regarding their role in helping protect the local environment. However, the regularity of these trainings varied amongst the different hotels: from sometimes, to weekly, to three to four times a year (see Appendix E for

specific details). The respondent from the Easterly commented that she ended up using the services of a Green Globe's consultant for this training,

There was a consultant from Green Globe who came for training and everyone attended the three day training. There was also a trip to B's recycling, but not everyone could come. It is difficult to have everyone attending these things as not everyone can leave and leave the place unattended. (Hotel employee 7)

It is interesting to note that out of the seven Green Globe certified hotels that participated in this study, only one respondent declared using the services of a Green Globe consultant. Taking a different approach, a couple of hotel employees indicated their preference to hold small departmental meetings on a regular basis and when needed, since according to them, 'little meetings per department help refresh people on a constant basis on environmental initiatives' (Hotel employee 5).

#### **5.5.3.1.5 A Recycling Program is in Place at the Hotel**

All hotel employees reported having a recycling program in place at their hotels. Interestingly enough, only the Blue Reef and the Red Mahogany Hotel provided recycling bins in their guest rooms. The other six hotels simply provided general recycling in their premises, either in their restaurants or by their pools, relying on housekeeping to separate recyclable materials from regular waste in the rooms: 'we have a general one, but not in the rooms. The staff is in charge of separating recycling in the rooms' (Hotel employee 1). From what the researcher was able to observe, these hotels did not appear to have a central processing place area where waste was separated and thus, separation seemed to be done from the moment the garbage was collected. No respondents commented on this matter.

A couple of hotel employees discussed during their interviews the challenges they have faced trying to rely on housekeeping to separate recycling: 'Recycling does not always work. Housekeeping needs to be reminded often of this. If you are not behind them constantly, they simply don't do it' (Hotel employee 2). In fact, during her stay at the Sunny Beach Hotel and the Caribbean Sunshine, the researcher observed housekeeping disposing at several occasions of materials that could have been recycled such as plastic bottles and paper. However, the researcher was not able to see if this separation was done elsewhere and thus, cannot confirm with certainty that all these materials went to regular waste.

#### **5.5.3.1.6 The Hotel measures its Energy Consumption and Makes Sure that is Careful with the Amount of Energy Used**

All hotel employees explained that they try to measure their energy consumption as much as possible. The hotel employee from The Green Monkey Hotel stated that she checks her electricity and water bills on a regular basis, as for her, it is a good indicator of the level of performance of her employees.

Right now, I noticed that there is an increased consumption of water and electricity compared to before, so this tells me that the room attendants are not paying as much close attention anymore, that they are leaving A/C on while cleaning rooms... So, I will have a meeting to remind them how it is important because it helps pay them at the end of the month. (Hotel employee 4)

Although an interesting approach, hotels that decide to adopt this strategy need to be careful to differentiate between the energy that their guests are actually consuming and what their employees are doing to increase this energy consumption (if doing anything).

The respondent from the Blue Reef and the Red Mahogany Hotel reported being part of the CHENACT program, an energy efficient program whose mission is to 'improve the competitiveness of small and medium sized hotels (less than 400 rooms) in the Caribbean Region through improved use of energy' (CHENACT, 2010).

We participate in CHENACT, an energy efficient project. They do audits on how to be more energy efficient. This program is more comprehensive than Green Globe. One of the benefits is that with these audits (from CHENACT), hotel already accomplishes what is has to with Green Globe...so they go hand in hand. (Hotel employee 2)

Therefore, participating in CHENACT can help hotel employees monitor the energy consumption of their properties while also adhering to some of Green Globe's indicators.

It is interesting to note that during her stay at the Sunny Beach Hotel and the Caribbean Sunshine, housekeeping was changing the towels every day despite the fact that the researcher handed them in the appropriate rack as requested by the 'in-room sign'<sup>30</sup> of the hotel. This situation probably does not help control or reduce the energy and water consumption of these

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<sup>30</sup> This 'in-room sign' specified: Please hang used towels on the bathroom's rack if you want to reuse them, or leave them on the floor if you want housekeeping to change them.

hotels, and suggests that staff behaviours are as important, or even more important, than official hotel policies and programs.

#### **5.5.3.1.7 Hotel Helps Support Environmental Programs and Natural Protected Areas**

The respondents of three of the certified hotels acknowledged helping support environmental programs and natural protected areas. Two hotel employees discussed how their hotels participate in the annual beach clean-up organized by the local authorities and the FTC, with another respondent stating that her property directly supported the Barbados Sea Turtle Project (see Appendix E for more specific details). Another hotel employee simply explained that her hotel provided environmental information in the lobby and in room binders, without being directly involved with environmental programs or in helping natural protected areas.

#### **5.5.3.2 Sustainable Management Criteria**

##### **5.5.3.2.1 Promotional and Marketing Materials are Accurate and do not Promise more than what Business Delivers**

All hotel employees declared trying to meet these criteria as much as possible. However, no further information or details on the matter were provided by the respondents.

##### **5.5.3.2.2 Training Sessions are regularly offered to Current Staff**

Four hotel employees reported offering training sessions to their staff either once or twice a year (See Appendix E for specific details). The hotel employee from the Barbados Resort further explained that while her training tends to occur only once a year, she still ensures that memos containing important information circulate on a regular basis (Hotel employee 3). The respondent from the Sunny Beach Hotel stated that during high season, her hotel provides periodic training to its employees during the hotel's weekly 'Staff Cocktail Hour' (Hotel employee 1).

On the other hand, the hotel employees from the three other hotels discussed how they cannot afford to offer periodic training sessions to their employees due to a lack of human and financial resources. However, The Easterly's respondent further argued that 'because my establishment is small, information circulates easier between staff, so there is no need to have them (training sessions) on a regular basis' (Hotel employee 7).

##### **5.5.3.2.3 The Hotel Maintains Regular and Open Communication with the Local Community to have the Community's Opinion on Diverse Tourism Projects**

The hotel employees of four certified hotels explained that their properties did not really maintain open communication with the local community regarding any projects or initiatives. The two other hotel employees simply explained that they could not answer this question since they were not involved at this level (see Appendix E for specific details).

#### **5.5.3.2.4 The Hotel was Constructed by Respecting Traditional Rights and did not Displace Local Populations**

Out of the eight hotel employees, four respondents were not able to comment regarding how their hotels were constructed or if the construction of the latter displaced local populations. The four other interviewees reported that either 1) the land was empty before the construction of their property, or 2) that sugar cane plantations were located there before, with no inhabitants living on that land: ‘The hotel is very old; it was built in the 50s. There was sugar cane there before but to my knowledge, the construction of the hotel did not any displace people’ (Hotel employee 6). On this matter, the researcher found no evidence to suggest that the construction of these hotels had displaced anyone.

#### **5.5.3.2.5 Local Tools and Appropriate Materials were used to build the Establishment as to Minimize Environmental Impact**

A total of three respondents stated that their properties were built with local tools and appropriate materials in order to minimize environmental impact on the island.

I decided to build the hotel with wood over concrete as it fits more with the weather of the area. The sea salt from the wind really goes through concrete and wood lasts longer. When it was built, I also made sure that there was natural shade all over, that the sun did not go directly to windows, so like that rooms would be naturally cooler. (Hotel employee 7)

The respondent from the Barbados Resort further specified that while the materials used to build her property were from Barbados, ‘it was a company from Trinidad that built the hotel because it was more cost-effective than Barbados’ (Hotel employee 3).

Only the hotel employee from the Blue Flying Fish reported that her hotel was not necessarily built with suitable materials to the island’s weather.

Hotel was made out of concrete which was a popular material in the 50s, but not necessarily the freshest for this climate. Carlisle Bay and Bridgetown is mostly coral. It keeps buildings fresher inside, it is thicker and more resistant. (Hotel employee 6)

After further investigation on this statement, the researcher was not able to find direct information comparing the advantages of buildings constructed with concrete versus coral ones. However, coral is a non-renewable material that is highly protected today by diverse environmental organisations, since building with this material would be performed at a high cost to the reef environment and ecosystem (FAO, 2012). Regarding building with concrete<sup>31</sup>, Malisch (1990) discusses how this material can be suitable for warm and humid climates when adopting certain precautions<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, although coral might be more resistant, potentially keeping buildings fresher inside, the former is not necessarily a more sustainable material to use in the construction of hotels or any other buildings compared to concrete.

### **5.5.3.3 Socio-Economic Criteria**

#### **5.5.3.3.1 Local Residents are Employed at this Hotel**

The employees of five of the certified hotels reported that all their employees were local residents. However, it is important to specify that despite employing only local staff, the Green Monkey Hotel was actually owned by Americans and the Easterly Hotel by Germans.

When looking at the two other certified properties, a few managers were foreigners while the remaining employees were local people. The Barbados Resort interviewee further specified,

Our hotel is mostly Bajans – only 1-2% are foreigners. Two years ago the hotel was bringing people from outside. But now, there is a legislation that says that it has to be someone from the hotel to occupy the position - if not able to find someone that has the capacities in Barbados or no one available, then you can look outside and bring foreigners. (Hotel employee 3)

This perspective was also described by two other hotel employees,

According to the Union and the laws of Barbados, new positions need to be advertised first internally, to give the opportunity to staff to get promoted. It is the law and is enforced by the Barbados Worker Union. There are different sections, but the hotel and tourism industry falls under this law. This law also says that all employees get the same salary. (Hotel employee 5)

All employees are locals, that is the policy. If you need someone, you need to look here first and if you are really not able to find someone with that expertise, then you can hire someone from outside. As it gets complicated, companies prefer just hiring here, and then training if needed. (Hotel employee 7)

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<sup>31</sup> Traditional concrete is a mixture of cement, sand, gravel and water (Malisch, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> Precautions include: controlled temperatures during production, efficient placement and finishing, moisture control throughout curing period and careful testing and inspection by qualified personnel (Malisch, 1990).

The researcher tried to investigate more about Barbados' laws and policies on hiring local personnel. Unfortunately, she was not able to find supporting information on these quotes since the Bridgetown Public Library did not have this data; moreover, when trying to access the information on the Barbados' Ministry of Labour website, the web links leading to the needed information were not working. Therefore, the researcher needs to rely on the honesty of the respondents on this matter.

#### **5.5.3.3.2 Local Residents are Employed in Management Positions**

All hotel employees reported that local residents are also employed in management positions at their respective properties. It is important to note that the respondent of one of these hotels, the Easterly, explained that her property does not really offer management opportunities to its employees since the establishment is too small (Hotel employee 7). However, except for the owner, all the employees in this hotel are local Barbadians.

#### **5.5.3.3.3 The Hotel Hires Women in an Equitable Way**

All hotel employees reported that women were hired in an equitable way in their properties. In fact, most of the hotel employees (75%) that participated in this study were female and occupied senior positions such as hotel directors, managers, assistant-managers and even a hotel owner. Moreover, the researcher observed that most housekeeping, front desk and restaurant positions in all these certified hotels were held by women.

#### **5.5.3.3.4 Hotel Encourages Customers to Purchase Local Crafts, Goods and Services**

Seven hotel employees stated that they encourage as much possible their customers to purchase local crafts, goods and services. The approach taken to implement this criterion varied amongst the different hotels: including a page in the room binders listing the different local restaurants and shopping malls located in the area; supplying brochures and flyers in the hotels' lobby, and; supplying Barbados magazines and guides in each of their guest's rooms (see Appendix E for specific details). Only one employee reported not really encouraging customers to purchase local goods and services.

#### **5.5.3.3.5 The Hotel Purchases Local Food**

All hotel employees declared trying to purchase local food as much as possible. However, every respondent reported the challenges that adhering to this criterion can represent, making



comments such as: ‘we try as much as possible, but sometimes, we need to import due to quality and scarcity’ (Hotel employee 3); ‘there is a clear defined wet-dry season which affects local farmers and their crops. So, sometimes there is not enough of one product and we need to import’ (Hotel employee 5) –and– ‘as much as possible. Sometimes it is hard when it comes to meat. Certain times there are shortages in Barbados and needs to be imported’ (Hotel employee 4).

It is also important to note that even if hotel employees purchase fruit and vegetables from local farmers, it does not necessarily mean these products were grown locally.

Most of it is local – we buy from a local farmer, but themselves might not have local fruits and veggies, they might need to import. Meat also has to be imported sometimes, but we try to buy local chicken, fish... (Hotel employee 4)

We buy from local suppliers, but sometimes they import their products. The hotel still uses local company but even they have to import some products. The beef is mostly imported. I would like to see our customers reaction if we served them local beef. We would lose a lot of visitors if we did not do this. (Hotel employee 6)

This situation was observed by the researcher at several occasions when she went to the Cheapside market<sup>33</sup> to buy her weekly ratio of fruits and vegetables. During informal conversations with local farmers, the researcher always asked if the products they sold were locally grown or imported. At several occasions, the Barbadian farmers confirmed that the products were imported due to current scarcity on the island.

#### **5.5.3.3.6 The Hotel Encourages Local Businesses by Sending Customers to Use their Services (e.g. Guided Tours, Snorkelling Trips, etc.)**

All hotel employees declared attempting to encourage local businesses as much as possible. Only a few interviewees explained how they did this, discussing that they supply flyers and brochures in their lobbies, while also providing the necessary information if requested by the guests (refer to Appendix E for specific details).

#### **5.5.3.3.7 The Hotel Actively Supports Social Community Development such as Education, Health and Sanitation (e.g. Financial Support, Volunteer Programs, etc.)**

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<sup>33</sup> Cheapside market is a local market where farmers come and sell their products including sweet potatoes, yams, breadfruits, green bananas, okras, pumpkins, cucumbers, tomatoes and onions, amongst others. The market is the most popular on Saturdays.

Six hotel employees reported actively supporting social community projects and different examples were provided: room night donations to support charity and fundraising events; participation in annual beach clean-ups; donations of food, rooms and meeting space for community groups; donations of old furniture and; supporting the Sea Turtle Project (refer to Appendix A for specific details).

The employees of the two other hotels, the Easterly and the Sunny Beach Hotel, explained that they often lack time and/or budget to implement this standard and thus, did not tend to support social projects and/or initiatives.

#### **5.5.3.4 Cultural Criteria**

##### **5.5.3.4.1 The Hotel Uses Elements of Local Art or Cultural Heritage in its Decoration.**

All hotel employees reported trying to use as much as possible elements of local art and cultural heritage in the design and decoration of their properties. For example, a few hotel employees explained that some of the paintings in their hotels, either in their guest rooms or lobbies, were painted by local artists: ‘All paintings in all the rooms are done by local artists and represent images of the island’ (Hotel employee 2) –and- ‘Most of it. Paintings in the lobby are done by a local artist’ (Hotel employee 3). The respondent of the Green Monkey Hotel further commented,

To some extent. Some paintings are from local artist and the Caribbean region; but we are owned by an American chain so sometimes things like that comes from them, and as it is a chain, that is what we need to put up. (Hotel employee 4)

This comment is interesting since it demonstrates how hotel employees can face outside restrictions when attempting to meet the necessary criteria, such as hotel management and ownership.

The hotel employees from both the Easterly and the Blue Flying Fish stated that most of their furniture was made in Barbados, mostly from mahogany, a local tree. The Easterly’s hotel employee further reported that she likes to buy pottery from Earth Work, a local store, to decorate her guest rooms. However, the Blue Flying Fish interviewee argued,

We would not make money if we had to buy BDS\$ 30 the mug (from Earth Work Pottery)! It is all good being green and social, but there are restrictions, especially cost restrictions. There used to be an artist that did some paintings for the hotel but not anymore. (Hotel employee 6, emphasis added)

Therefore, budget restrictions can be a challenge when hotels attempt to use elements of local art in the decoration of their premises.

#### **5.5.3.4.2 Information about the Local Culture and Cultural Heritage is provided to Customers**

All hotel employees declared that their establishments provided information about Barbados' local culture and cultural heritage to their customers by having Barbados' magazines and guides in every room, offering flyers and brochures in their lobbies, having an additional page on local culture in their room binders and by answering any questions clients might have on the matter.

Yes we do. We have information in some selected attractions in room binders; we have brochures and some flyers for attractions that have been picked out by the hotel like excursions, visit to gardens...We also have Barbados magazines in every room, and of course if people ask, we tell them. (Hotel employee 6)

The respondents from both the Barbados Resort and the Blue Flying Fish also reported writing any special events and activities occurring on the island on a notice board located in the main entrance of their establishments: 'We have a notice board at the entrance of events going on and of what the BHTA send us every day' (Hotel employee 2).

#### **5.5.3.4.3 The Hotel Attempts to Educate Customers on the Appropriate Verbal and Non-verbal Behaviour to use in the Local Community**

The employees of three certified hotels reported attempting to educate customers on appropriate behaviour that should be use in the local community. These respondents explained that they include in each room binder an additional page discussing the 'do's and don'ts of the island' (Hotel employee 4).

It is interesting that you mention this one as only four days ago, the hotel put this in place. It is a quite a Westernized island so locals are accustomed to tourists, but still. It talks about some dress code in certain places – no swim suit in restaurants or shopping; don't go in stores wet or in bikini; no topless on the beach; no touching the turtles if you see one; be careful when snorkelling or diving to not break coral; make sure you are in groups; what currency is used. (Hotel employee 3)

Although this is an interesting approach by hotel employees, it tends to put the onus on the tourists to take the time to read the binder and educate themselves on the appropriate behaviour to adopt while in Barbados.

Four hotel employees simply commented that they let their guests use their own discretion, answering questions and concerns if their customers ask.

#### **5.5.3.4.4 Hotel Offers the Opportunity for Local Artists to Sell their Crafts at the Hotel**

The employees of five certified hotels stated offering opportunities for local artists to come to their hotels and sell their crafts during their weekly ‘Manager’s Cocktail Party’: ‘Yes, every Wednesday evening we have the Manager’s Cocktail Party and have craft people coming over from 6h30 to 8h00. These local people sell wood art, other metal art, paintings...’ (Hotel employee 2). The interviewee from the Green Monkey further explained, ‘We also have a craft market every Monday right outside our hotel where a few artists sell their art and other things’ (Hotel employee 4).

Two other hotel employees explained that they do not allow artists to sell their crafts in their properties arguing that ‘some tourists might not like that’ (Hotel employee 7). The respondent from the Barbados Resort further commented,

I submitted a proposal to the administration of the hotel to have a local market at the hotel at all times. However, the hotel does not want to because it says that there is no space for it, it does not fit with the structure of the hotel. I personally do not agree, but well. The craft market would be good for tourists: it is convenient, safe; it is entertainment because it is a good activity...and it is also good for local entrepreneurs. (Hotel employee 4)

Therefore, physical space can potentially become an obstacle when trying to give the opportunity to local artists to come on a regular basis and sell their crafts at the hotels.

#### **5.5.3.4.4 All Personnel Receive Periodic Training regarding their Role in Helping Manage Socio-Cultural Practices**

The employees of four certified hotels reported offering training regarding socio-cultural practices (see Appendix E for more details). No information on what this training involved was discussed by any of the respondents. The other hotel employees stated that their training tends to be mostly on the environmental side. No reasons were disclosed by any of these respondents explaining the reasons for this tendency.

#### **5.5.4 Challenges when Implementing Green Globe’s Criteria**

Tourism professionals and hotel employees were questioned about the different challenges that hotels have encountered, or could potentially encounter, when attempting to implement

Green Globe's sustainability criteria. Three main themes emerged from all the answers collected: 1) changing employees' old habits; 2) budget restrictions, and; 3) low quality and regular shortages of certain local products. The next section will describe these three challenges in further detail.

One of the major challenges that 90% of respondents mentioned was the difficulty in changing the old working habits and attitudes of employees, especially with reference to cleaning practices and recycling. Regarding the cleaning habits, a hotel employee explains how 'Bajans like to use strong chemical products as they believe it cleans better. They don't really trust the eco-friendly ones' (Hotel employee 1). One respondent even described how several of her employees started bringing products from their homes since 'they did not believe that low-chemical products could do the job' (Hotel employee 4). Thus, hotel employees had to provide regular training regarding the importance of using environmentally friendly products, and their actual efficiency.

All hotel employees also reported facing difficulties when trying to implement recycling practices at their hotels. Four respondents explained how Barbados is currently behind in the environmental process, slowly realizing the importance of recycling: 'before no one talked about environment and the importance of recycling. But now, more people are and it is more present in the newspapers' (Hotel employee 3). Since this movement is rather recent, hotels that have been certified for several years had to train employees 'that had none to little knowledge on 'greening' and its importance' (Hotel employee 5).

It was also difficult because we went from people that knew nothing to greening. We still have a few people that are resistant and there is a lot of walking behind them and see what they are actually doing. If you are not behind people, constantly reminding them, they will not do it. I try to remind them that it is not only for the hotel, but also that they can do it at home, and it is for their children and their future. (Hotel employee 4)

Therefore, the process appears to have been slow and repetitive, every hotel employee reporting how difficult it has been to teach employees on the importance of recycling. This is particularly an important challenge to take into consideration as five out of the seven certified hotels do not provide recycling bins in their rooms, relying on their employees to separate 'recyclable materials' from 'regular waste'. Despite repetitive training, all hotel employees reported that housekeeping is still not separating these materials, a situation that was constantly observed by

the researcher when she stayed at the three different certified establishments<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, ‘old habits are one of the causes why the certification process has been so slow in implementing’ (Hotel employee 3). However, as a tourism professional points out, ‘other countries have gone through similar processes and difficulties. We just need to be patient with recycling as sometimes things take time to be established, and up and running’ (Tourism professional 4).

Budget also seems to be a challenge for the seven certified hotels. For example, three hotel employees explained that budget restrictions have prevented their establishments from hiring additional personnel to help with the certification process. Thus, coordinators, managers and/or hotel owners end up being in charge of implementing, monitoring and filling all the necessary paper work to attain and/or maintain certification, on top of their regular duties (Hotel employee 2 & 7). Through additional conversations with a tourism professional, the researcher learned that hotels did not tend to compensate these employees for their additional workload, who often have to perform the necessary tasks on a voluntary basis.

The success stories that she has seen is when a person is dedicated to the job, somebody paid for the job. In many cases, there is not one person dedicated to that and is one person who ends up doing it because he or she cares, but it is on top of their current work and not necessarily paid for. (Tourism professional 1)

Therefore, it appears that hotels seeking certification would benefit from employing one person full time to take care of the certification process and the needed requirements.

On another note, every hotel employee discussed how budget also tends to be a challenge when attempting to change to ‘greener’ modes of operation: ‘it is all good being green, but there are also certain restrictions, especially cost restrictions’ (Hotel employee 6). As a respondent explains, ‘we had to replace so many things to be more energy efficient: change light bulbs, change products to eco-friendly ones, toilets to be more efficient ones. So, it becomes very expensive at the end’ (Hotel employee 2). In fact, three hotel employees reported that environmentally friendly products tend to be rather expensive on the island<sup>35</sup>. For example, The Easterly’s respondent estimated that her hotel spends at least 1000\$ US a month in eco-friendly cleaning products. She further added that one LED light bulb can cost up to BDS\$ 60 (or US\$ 30) on the island, and thus, her establishment cannot afford to replace them all at once.

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<sup>34</sup> The Easterly, the Sunny Beach Hotel and the Caribbean Sunshine.

<sup>35</sup> Due to Barbados’ remote location, most eco-friendly products need to be imported. Therefore, the cost of these items tends to be rather high (Tourism professional 1 & Hotel employee 7).

Therefore, she decided to change her current light bulbs for eco-friendly ones ‘only when they were not functioning anymore’ (Hotel employee 4). This approach was also shared by the Green Monkey Hotel,

If toilet breaks, we replace it with toilets with low flush. At this point, we can only do it as we replace things. We do the best with what we have. We try to achieve the requirement within the limits that we have. (Hotel employee 4)

Consequently, the implementation process of certain Green Globe indicators by the accommodation sector can potentially be delayed by the high prices of environmentally friendly products.

Finally, all hotel employees reported that it can be challenging to always purchase local food and products on the island. In fact, an hotel employee explained how due to Barbados’ small size and remote location, it is sometimes difficult to find certain fruit and/or vegetables, especially during rainy season when torrential rain falls can damage local crops (Hotel employee 1). This situation was observed by the researcher at several occasions. One week, she was not able to find tomatoes in the local grocery store and when she asked a street vendor if his tomatoes were locally grown, he replied: ‘no, sorry. Had to be imported - there is no more tomatoes on the island’ (Community member 12)<sup>36</sup>. The week after, the researcher was not able to find onions, a shortage that lasted two weeks. This situation does not only apply to fruit and vegetables, but according to all hotel employees, meat has to regularly be imported due to frequent scarcity on the island and general quality concerns. When the researcher discussed this situation with two tourism professionals, the respondents explained how there is a current lack of linkage between the agricultural sector and tourism, and thus, hotel employees are often forced to import food and other produce instead of encouraging local farmers.

### **5.5.5 Criticisms**

Certification programs have been highly criticized in the literature: some authors argue that these programs are rather expensive (Sasidharan et al., 2002; Font & Sasidharan, 2001); are often not customized to the needs and specificities of hosts destinations (Buckley, 2002; Medina, 2005); and that their monitoring and auditing practices tend to lack transparency (Sasidharan et al., 2002; Buckley, 2002). Therefore, the researcher was interested in taking a closer examination

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<sup>36</sup> This statement also demonstrates that hotels might be buying from local farmers, but that sometimes the latter also need to import their products.

at Green Globe's overall practices in order to see if these criticisms also applied to this program. As community members were not familiar with this program, the information found in this section is purely based on the answers provided by both hotel employees and tourism professionals.

One of the main themes that constantly arose throughout the interviews is how expensive achieving and maintaining certification with Green Globe could be since costs simply tend to accumulate over time. According to three tourism professionals, hotels do not only have to pay for the certification and auditing fees, but in several cases, have to cover for the travel expenses of consultants and/or auditors (Tourism professionals 1, 10 & 11). On this note, one tourism professional had an interesting story to share, recounting how she met with an Environmental Officer from one of the Green Globe certified hotels who was currently extremely frustrated with the program. Apparently, the hotel was in the process of renewing its current certification and thus, was requiring the services of a third-party auditor to verify that all the necessary requirements were still in place. In order to keep expenses down, hotel management decided to choose a Green Globe auditor who was currently based in Barbados. However, although this auditor lived on the island, she still asked the hotel to provide her with accommodation and meals while the auditing process would take place. Therefore, it appears that certain auditors try to take advantage of their positions in order to receive special treatment from the hotels' part (Tourism professional 10). On another hand, although this was not mention by this respondent, it is important to note that this approach could simply be part of the auditor trying to 'experience' the hotel on a daily basis, potentially being an important part of the auditing process.

Another recurrent weakness mentioned by four tourism professionals and three hotel employees regarding Green Globe's practices is that this program tends to be rather superficial: 'it is not enough hands on; it does not explain how standards should be implemented, or does not give enough analysis or follow-up on the results' (Tourism professional 10). In fact, a couple of hotel employees that used to work with Green Hotel Certification before the merger, reported being rather unsatisfied with Green Globe since this program does not seem to 'have time for them' (Hotel employee 2). One respondent explains,

Support is not as good as when we started. Green Hotel Certification was more intimate with you; they came down to the property to make sure everything was good. Since we switched to Green Globe, we have not seen an auditor. It is more



out of their hands and they leave it up to you to do whatever you are supposed to. Now, we just go online, find the requirements, fill out everything, submit it, and we become certified. This lady is usually very busy and I do not really have contact with the representative. (Hotel employee 4)

Two tourism professionals further described how this lack of support is deplorable since some hotel employees might lack the necessary knowledge or human resources to properly achieve certification. In fact, these respondents reported how implementing all the requirements can be a rather time consuming occupation, sometimes needing a full-time dedicated employee to accomplish the necessary steps (Tourism professional 11). However, as explained previously, ‘not all the hotels have the human resources or budget to employ a person on a full time basis for this; or have the budget to pay for the services of a consultant’ (Tourism professional 10).

A respondent also mentioned that Green Globe’s rules, requirements and general practices tend to constantly change, making it even more confusing for the hotels seeking to achieve or renew certification (Tourism professional 10). This point was also brought up by one hotel employee from the Blue Flying Fish, who explained,

We have been certified since 2002, but it has been an on and off process. We were certified for two years, but dropped because it was so expensive and it was getting very complicated and confusing. They (Green Globe) seemed to be going on through a transition period that did not make it easy for hotels. It lacked of consistency and was requiring too much paper work. (Hotel employee 6)

The researcher also observed these constant changes, with Green Globe’s website having been modified at least three times in 11 months since the spring of 2011.

As explained previously, in order to achieve certification, Green Globe simply requires that tourism businesses meet 51% of the 337 indicators, without taking into consideration if the company is mostly implementing one type of indicator versus another (i.e. stressing more environmental indicators rather than cultural ones). In fact, The Easterly’s certification history represents a perfect example illustrating this situation. The respondent from this hotel explained how she received certification on her first attempt since the hotel already had several environmental modes of operation in place, while also employing local people: ‘it was easy points to make and we got certified right away’ (Hotel employee 7). She even acknowledged during her interview that the hotel tends to mostly implement environmental practices, putting aside socio-cultural indicators: ‘that is where I usually lose all my points’ (Hotel employee 7). To

defend this attitude, the hotel employee explains that she has no time, human resources or energy to achieve socio-cultural criteria.

It is also important to note that by only asking hotels to meet 51% of the total indicators, Green Globe indirectly allows hotel employees to choose the indicators they want to implement regardless of their importance to properly achieve sustainability. For example, the Environmental Officer of the Green Monkey explained how she tends to implement the indicators that are cheaper and easier to put in place first before moving to more important or complicated requirements (Hotel employee 4). Therefore, hotels can still achieve certification with Green Globe without necessarily implementing socio-cultural indicators and/or by simply adhering to easier requirements.

A couple of tourism professionals also mentioned that the transparency of Green Globe's auditing process tends to be questionable. In fact, these respondents explained that despite Green Globe's alleged neutral third-party auditing practices, the current representative for the Caribbean region is working both as a consultant and an auditor:

By having a person being both the consultant and the auditor, of course there is going to be a tendency for preferetism, pass on certain things. The job of an auditor is to stay as neutral as possible to be able to verify the information.  
(Tourism professional 10)

The researcher had the chance to meet with this Green Globe agent, and during her interview, the representative mentioned that she provided consultation services to hotels that needed assistance. However, the representative did not mention that she was an auditor as well. After conducting further investigations, the researcher discovered that this respondent was listed on the website as one of Green Globe's third-party auditors (Green Globe Website, 2011). Therefore, this suggests that Green Globe's auditing process might not be as transparent as claimed by the program.

The last criticism mentioned by both tourism professionals and hotel employees is how Green Globe does not recognize the differences that exist between hotels, a situation that could potentially influence the outcome of the auditing process. For example, a respondent discussed,

If there is a kitchen, tourists might be more inclined to bring their own food from outside, which are not necessary made of recyclable material, and then hotels are penalized. It also creates more garbage overall and then the hotel is penalized again. (Tourism professional 10)

In this case, guests are creating the additional garbage, not only by potentially using no eco-friendly materials to carry their food, but also by bringing additional provisions from the outside. Therefore, it is difficult and unfair to ask hotels that have kitchens or kitchenettes in their rooms to perform at the same level than establishments that do not offer these amenities.

A hotel employee also discussed that her establishment was located on Barbados' East Coast, and thus, buildings tend to be highly affected by the sea spray since this section of the island usually has stronger winds compared to the South and West Coasts. For example, she explained how she has to change the air-conditioning of her cottages every two years since the sea spray accelerates the rusting process. As she further states,

It is not the hotel's fault if we have to pollute more compared to other hotels that have different temperature. This type of weather differences are not taken into account in Green Globe's requirements for achieving certification. (Hotel employee 7)

Therefore, special conditions such as different types of establishments and/or weather differences do not seem to be taken into account during Green Globe's auditing process.

Results of this research also showed that the size of a hotel can potentially influence its level of adherence to certain indicators. For example, the respondent of the Easterly (the smallest hotel that participated in this study) reported that she does not provide regular fix training for her employees regarding environmental and socio-cultural practices since according to her, having a small number of employees facilitates the circulation of information amongst the staff. Moreover, this interviewee also explained that due to the small size of her property, no real management positions were available for her employees. Under these circumstances, it is perhaps more difficult for smaller properties to adhere to Green Globe's criterion that requires tourism businesses to provide management opportunities to hotel employees.

Budget restrictions also appeared to be different depending on the size of the property. In fact, results show that the respondents of small and medium size properties were more inclined to discuss budget as one of their main challenges when implementing certain indicators, especially considering that the price of eco-friendly products is rather high on the island. The Easterly's interviewee even explained that she was not able to participate in community projects (another Green Globe criterion) due to both budget and time restrictions. On a similar note, respondents from both small and medium hotels tended to discuss time restriction as an important challenge

in the certification process since the former were in charge of implementing all the necessary Green Globe requirements on top of their regular responsibilities. However, it is important to note that while this situation was not directly discussed by the respondents of the Blue Flying Fish and Barbados Resort (hotels situated in the large-scale category), after conducting further investigation, the researcher realized that these interviewees also had double professional duties.

Unfortunately, the researcher was not able to determine the quantitative correlation that exists between the size of a hotel and its level of adherence to Green Globe's criteria, nor if size was a parameter taken into account by Green Globe's auditors; however, results still show that it is important for certification programs such as Green Globe to consider the hotel's size in monitoring and auditing procedures.

## **5.6 Summary**

This chapter has highlighted the key empirical findings of this study. A summary of main findings is reported below:

### **Defining Ecotourism/Sustainable Tourism**

- Definitions provided by the three respondent sub-groups regarding both ecotourism and sustainable tourism had strong environmental tendencies. In fact, only one tourism professional included socio-cultural characteristics in his definition of sustainable tourism.
- Surprisingly, the three hotel employees were not able to provide a proper definition of both terms despite being directly involved with the certification process.

### **Responsibility of Hotels towards the Local Community**

#### *Impact of Hotels on General Well-Being of Barbadian Community*

- The majority of respondents think that hotels have both positive and negative impacts on the island.
- Examples of negative impacts: 1) Increased pollution and beach erosion; 2) Locals increasingly alienated from public beaches; 3) Unequal distribution of tourism revenues.
- Examples of positive impacts: 1) Hotels allow tourism to happen on the island; 2) important generators of both direct and indirect employment for local people.

#### *Protecting the Local Environment*

- All respondents agreed that hotels should help protect the local environment.
- Main advantage: Helps protect Barbados' key tourism product: beach.
- The main environmental action reported by 11 respondents was the necessity for hotels to establish recycling practices in their premises.

#### *Helping the Local Community*

- 42 respondents believe that hotels should help the local community.
- Main reasons: 1) Hotels have the resources to do it; 2) Recognize the importance of helping each other; 3) Potential marketing advantages by improving their overall image.

#### *Promote Local Culture*

- 41 respondents agree that hotels should help promote local culture.
- Main reasons: 1) Principal motive for tourists to visit Barbados; 2) Hotel employees have direct contact with tourists; 3) Good marketing advantages.
- Only three did not consider that it was the hotel's responsibility to promote local culture. The main reason identified was that certain tourists are not interested in local culture and thus, cannot be forced to experience this.

### **Local Issues**

#### *From an Environmental Perspective*

- Most common issue mentioned by the respondents was the necessity to establish garbage bins and recycling programs to minimize waste on the island.
- No respondent mentioned the necessity to establish programs to help protect Barbados' natural reserves and other nature sensitive areas.

#### *From a Social and Cultural Perspective*

- Due to current recessive times, several respondents discussed the necessity to create local employment, provide a better minimum wage and encourage entrepreneurship.
- Several respondents commented on the importance to help promote local food and festivals to tourists.
- A few respondents discussed the necessity to help improve Barbados' agricultural sector.
- A few respondents considered important to provide more youth educational programs and programs to help fight drug abuse amongst young Barbadians.

- Alcoholism was not mentioned by any of the respondents; however, this situation was observed by the researcher and discussed with locals during informal conversations.

### **Reasons for Joining Green Globe**

- Promoted by the CHTA as good for the environment and interesting financial opportunity.
- Four hotels were originally with Green Hotel Certification and decided to simply continue with Green Globe after the merger.
- Best available certification program on the island.

### **Advantages**

- Important cost savings in electricity and water bills.
- Good first initiative to push hotels to adopt greener and more responsible modes of operation.
- Increased marketing competitiveness.

NOTE: Despite the alleged marketing advantages promoted by this program, only one respondent reported having experienced increased business. Four other hotel employees have barely seen comments and/or feedback regarding their hotels' initiatives since certified.

### **Green Globe Sustainability Standards**

- All hotel employees reported using eco-friendly, low in chemicals, cleaning products.
- All hotel employees declared that the different plants, flowers and trees in their premises were either local or regional.
- All hotel employees reported providing periodic training to their employees. However, the majority of the respondents discussed that this training tends to focus on environmental practices over socio-cultural ones.
- All hotels have a recycling program in place. However, only two hotels have separate recycling bins in the rooms. The six other properties offer a general one, relying on housekeeping to separate the waste.
- All hotel employees attempt to measure their energy consumption.
- Only three hotel employees reported supporting environmental programs and natural areas.
- No hotel employee reported keeping regular and open communication with the local community.

- All hotel employees declared that to their best of the knowledge, their hotels were constructed by respecting traditional rights and by not displacing any local populations.
- Three hotel employees reported that their properties were built with appropriate materials suitable to the island's climate.
- All hotel employees reported that their employees were mostly locals, even in management positions, and that women were hired in an equitable way.
- All hotel employees stated that buying local food can be challenging due to scarcity and low quality.
- Six hotel employees reported encouraging their customers to purchase local good and services.
- Promoting local culture, local attractions and natural surroundings seem to be left to the guests' discretion: Barbados' magazines in rooms, brochures and flyers in hotel's lobby.
- Five hotel employees declared actively supporting social community projects.
- All hotel employees reported using elements of local art in their decor and design.
- Only three hotel employees reported attempting to educate on appropriate behaviour that should be used in the local community.
- Five hotel employees stated offering opportunities for local artists to come to their hotels and sell their products.

### **Challenges**

- Changing employees' old habits especially regarding cleaning and recycling practices.
- Budget restrictions stopping hotels from: 1) Hiring the necessary personnel to implement the needed requirements; 2) Substituting all their products and/or appliances to more efficient/eco-friendly ones.
- Regular shortages and lack of quality of certain local products (especially for meat).

### **Criticisms**

- Due to the different costs that hotels have to cover, achieving certification with Green Globe can become rather expensive.
- Green Globe does not seem to provide enough support for its members.
- Green Globe and its overall practices appear to be constantly changing, making it confusing for its members and/or hotels seeking certification.

- Hotels simply need to meet 51% of the 337 indicators, regardless of the category or level of importance.
- Green Globe appears to be facing a lack of transparency in its auditing process.
- Green Globe does not seem to take into consideration the specificities and/or differences of each type of establishment.



## **6.0 Discussion, Implications, Recommendations, Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The literature increasingly recognizes the relationship between environment, culture and community when aiming to safeguard host destinations (Font & Harris, 2004; Carrier & McLeod, 2005). Despite this increased recognition, only a few authors have examined the socio-cultural side of tourism certification programs and thus, this thesis aimed to fill this academic gap by evaluating the importance and feasibility of adopting socio-cultural in certification programs such as Green Globe (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004; Font & Sasidharan, 2001). This information may assist planners, policymakers, and governments in creating policies that will take a more holistic approach to tourism development in order to protect the natural resources of host destinations, while helping the local community and promoting its culture. The first section of this chapter will analyse the empirical findings of this study in relation to the literature. Similarities, discrepancies, criticisms and unexpected findings have been identified and will be discussed in further detail. The second section will examine the implications of this study from an academic, policymaking and planning perspective. Potential recommendations for future research will be also provided since the task of understanding certification programs, and their implications on both tourism development and host destinations, is far from being complete.

### **6.2 Factors Influencing Certification Programs and their Practices**

One of the objectives of this thesis was to explore how culture, social factors, geography, and/or policies of a tourist destination can shape and influence certification programs and their overall practices. The literature often criticizes these programs since their criteria tend to be generalized to countries worldwide, without taking into consideration the needs and specificities of each destination (Buckley, 2002). This situation particularly arises with international certification programs such as Green Globe since it might be difficult for these programs to properly customize their various criteria and indicators to the realities of every country (Epler et al., 2001, as cited in Medina, 2005). In fact, the empirical findings of this research revealed a few examples demonstrating how Green Globe's requirements were not always customized to Barbados' current reality. The following section will discuss in further detail these examples.

### **6.2.1 Influence of Local Culture and other Social Factors**

The historical background of host destinations cannot be neglected when seeking to understand certification programs and their overall practices. For example, Barbados has a long history of colonialism that has shaped the culture, traditions and attitudes of the present Barbadian community. Therefore, this country presents a relevant example of how tourism development occurs in an ex-colonial society since tourism can potentially reinforce prejudices of race and social class due to the different demographic characteristics of both hosts and guests (Husbands, 2011). In fact, in the case of ex-colonies like Barbados, problems of race and ethnicity have a tendency to be rather sensitive issues for the local population, with ‘white’ visitors ‘becoming associated with whatever exploitative relationship that tourism as an industry engenders’ (Husbands, 2011, p. 123). Sharing this perspective, a few participants of this study discussed how locals sometimes have difficulties dissociating ‘service’ with ‘servitude,’ leading them to occasionally be unpleasant towards tourists and/or not professionally perform to the required levels. Pattullo (1996) adds that these attitudes can be further fuelled by hotels tending to alienate locals from public beaches, a situation that was once again reinforced by this research’s findings. This local attitude affects the implementation process of certification programs since hotel management need to constantly remind employees that adopting environmental and socio-cultural modes of operation are not only good for tourism, but also necessary to protect the natural, human and cultural resources of their country. Thus, as empirical findings showed, changing certain habits and cultural attitudes can represent an important challenge for hotels seeking certification, slowing down in return the overall implementation process.

It is recognized in the literature that tourism has a tendency to socially and culturally transform destinations, often changing the livelihoods of host communities. Barbados offers a suitable example of this situation, since due to the island’s British legacy, the country was highly dependent on agriculture up to the 1960s, when the Barrow government began to strongly promote tourism as a new source of development. Since then, most Barbadians left the agricultural sector seeking better and more rewarding opportunities in tourism related activities. This social change had important repercussions on the country and today, despite the island’s favourable climate and geography for successful cultivation, Barbados’ agricultural sector is facing several challenges. For example, the lack of local and experienced farmers has created

regular shortages of certain products, such as fruit, vegetables and meat, pushing the island to depend on the importation of these goods. This situation affects the implementation of Green Globe's requirements by Barbadian hotels since hotel employees need to regularly rely on imported goods instead of encouraging local products.

As explained in Chapter Two of this thesis, Barbados is considered a 'developed' nation by both the World Bank and the United Nations. However, despite this consideration, the country is still facing important societal issues that need to be addressed by local authorities. While the literacy rate of the island is impressive (97%), Barbados appears to have a relatively high unemployment rate (10.7%) and low minimum wage combined with high living costs. The findings of this study showed that several hotels participated in the 'Adopt-a-School' program and although this is a good social initiative that cannot be dismissed, this approach might not necessarily represent the most important societal concern of the Barbadian community; in fact, several respondents mentioned the current necessity for Barbadian authorities to help create employment opportunities for the local population since locals were still suffering from the negative impacts that the 2009 international recession had on Barbados' tourism (see section 4.3.3.2 for more details). Therefore, certification programs and national governments of host destinations need to work together to inform the accommodation sector of any social problems that the local community is facing and inform them of social programs that need additional financing or human support. This approach will not only help improve the general well-being of local communities, but also provide hotel management and employees with ideas on how to achieve social indicators specific to the country's needs.

### **6.2.2 Influence of Geography**

It is also important for certification programs such as Green Globe, to consider the topology, climate and geographical location of the host destination. The findings of this research showed that due to Barbados' small size, remote location and marked wet season, the island often relies on the importation of several agricultural products, including fruit, vegetables and meat. This geographical and climate situation does not only lead to regular scarcity of certain goods on the island, but also tends to increase the overall price of local commodities. Therefore, it becomes difficult for Barbadian hotel employees to constantly purchase and use local products (as

required by some of Green Globe's criteria) and thus, Green Globe needs to take into account these physical specificities in its auditing process.

The research also revealed that Green Globe does not seem to take into consideration that different climates can affect the level of adherence of hotels to certain indicators. For example, one Barbadian certified hotel was located on the east coast of the island, a region that experiences strong dominant north-easterly winds. The sea spray from these winds tends to accelerate the rusting process of metal and thus, hotels located in this area have to change appliances frequently, a practice that is considered 'bad' under Green Globe since it increases the amount of waste created by the hotel. Consequently, it would be important for Green Globe to take this information into consideration since it is not the hotels' fault that due to special weather conditions these properties are inclined to produce more annual waste than others.

Barbados' remote geographical location also affects the price and availability of environmentally friendly products on the island. As shown by the findings of this research, this situation has forced hotels to slowly adopt 'greener' modes of operation since budget restrictions stop them from changing all appliances or products to more efficient ones at once. Therefore, it becomes important once again for Green Globe to take into consideration the geography of a destination in its auditing procedures as not every nation might have the same capabilities to implement quickly certain indicators.

### **6.2.3 Influence of Local Policies and/or Programs**

Rivera (2004) maintains that local policies and programs can help determine to what extent the presence of certification programs tends to be accepted by the tourism stakeholders and the local community of a host destination. In fact, empirical findings of this study revealed that, when local authorities decide to develop tourism in a sustainable and responsible fashion, programs such as Green Globe can potentially help achieve these goals, increasing their acceptability in the host destination. According to a respondent, Green Globe represents an interesting tool to assist the tourism sector achieve the goals and guidelines of the *White Paper for Tourism Development* (2010). Moreover, Green Globe appears to be strongly promoted by the CHTA as a good financial opportunity for Barbados' accommodation sector, increasing this program's level of presence on the island.

Empirical findings also revealed that the presence or absence of local programs and services offered by a host destination can play an important role in the proper implementation of certain Green Globe indicators. In the case of Barbados, the current condition of recycling on the island represents a good example illustrating this influence. Since the Barbadian government has just recently initiated the promotion and implementation of recycling throughout the country, Barbados does not yet have a national system in place to collect the recyclable materials on a regular basis. Moreover, the local community has just recently started to understand the implications of recycling and its overall processes. Under these circumstances, it becomes more difficult for Barbadian certified hotels to implement recycling in their establishments compared to countries like Canada that has governmental support on the matter. Not only do Barbadian hotel management have to train employees who have little to no knowledge about recycling and its importance, but hotel employees also have to organize recycling practices to the best of their abilities. Once again, certification programs like Green Globe should consider these types of differences in their agendas and ensure that they take into consideration the national and local programs that a nation has in place (or is lacking) in their auditing procedures. This approach will help ensure that the indicators and their monitoring are customized to each country's capabilities and specificities.

### **6.3 Benefits for Adhering to Socio-Cultural Indicators**

One of the objectives of this research was to investigate the benefits that adhering to both environmental and socio-cultural criteria can represent for the accommodation sector of popular tourist destinations. The literature often discusses the key role that hotels play in tourism development and the important repercussions that these establishments can have on the natural resources, culture and local community of host destinations (Jafari & Marin, 2002; Giannelloni & Robinot, 2010). Therefore, the following section will discuss the different benefits revealed by the empirical findings of this research, with hopes that this information will encourage hotel management and employees to adopt more responsible and comprehensive modes of operation.

#### **6.3.1 From an Environmental Perspective**

Giannelloni & Robinot (2010) state that hotels often have greater environmental impacts compared to 'other types of buildings of similar size as tourists tend to consume more than ordinary levels of water and waste as they considered themselves on vacation' (p.157). However,

as discussed by both the literature and the respondents of this study, while the passage of tourists is temporary, the environmental and social repercussions of tourism on host communities tend to be permanent (Jafari & Marin, 2002; Respondents 2 & 3, 2011).

In the case of this study, respondents seemed aware of this situation and all considered it important that hotels help protect the local environment, since Barbados' natural resources are the base of the country's tourism product. By taking this approach, Barbadian hotels do not only help protect the local environment and ensure repetitive business to the island, but also help satisfy the current demand for 'greener' tourism products and services (Giannelloni & Robinot, 2010). Therefore, the accommodation sector would simply benefit from adhering to sound environmental practices since such practices will help protect Barbados' main tourism product (beaches) for future generations, while providing hotels with an increased competitive advantage due to their positive and improved image.

### **6.3.2 From a Social Perspective**

Fleckenstein & Huebsch (1999) maintain that 'being ethical is good business since being ethical enhances a company's profits management effectiveness, public image and employee relations' (p.142). In fact, although altruistic reasons were mentioned by respondents, the results of this study suggest that by adopting sound social practices, hotels could benefit from interesting marketing advantages. As described by the Travel Foundation survey (discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis), customers consider it important to stay in hotels that have good social repercussions on host communities. Moreover, respondents explained that by helping the local community, hotels could improve their overall image and thus, attract more tourists to their establishments. Therefore, although adopting socio-cultural criteria can represent both financial and time commitment, hotels can benefit from being socially responsible in the longer term.

It is also interesting to note that by encouraging tourists to visit local attractions and festivals, such as Crop Over or local farmers' markets, hotels are not only generating additional income for local farmers and artists, but also providing interesting and unique experiences for their guests. Therefore, such an approach can help hotels increase their competitiveness since by offering a different product they can distinguish themselves from other similar properties.

### **6.3.3 From a Cultural Perspective**

As shown by the results of this study, over half of the respondents (59%) agreed that hotels should help promote local culture, since according to them, culture is one of the principal reasons for tourists to visit Barbados. This finding is interesting since several studies show how beach and warm weather tends to be one of the major travelling motivators for tourists visiting beach destinations, especially for visitors travelling from Northern parts of Europe and America (Swanson & Horridge, 2006; Prebensen, 2005, as cited in Prebensen, Skallerud & Chen, 2010). Moreover, other studies discuss several other travel motivators including relaxation and escape (Loker and Perdue, 1992; Saayman and Van der Merwe, 2007, as cited in Van der Merwe, Slabbert and Saayman, 2011); destination attractiveness from an accommodation, safety, affordability and climate point of view (Swanson & Horridge, 2006; Van der Merwe et al., 2011); shopping (Horneman, Carter, Wei & Ruys, 2002; Sirakaya, Uysal & Yoshioka, 2003, as cited in Swanson & Horridge, 2006) and; experiencing new things and attractions (Ahmed, Barber, & d'Astous, 1998; Prebensen, 2005, as cited in Prebensen, et al., 2010). Thus, as these different studies demonstrate, although there are several motivators for tourists to travel to beach destinations, cultural attractions are not necessarily the main or an important reason. However, it is important to note that the literature increasingly discusses how these motivators are changing with a larger number of tourists looking to experience the people and culture of the places they visit (Jayawardena, McDavid & Spence, 2002; Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Smith, 2009). Therefore, although tourist destinations, hotels and other tourism stakeholders need to keep in mind that there are different motivators pushing visitors to Barbados, they still need to acknowledge the new market change and start offering more cultural products and services in order to stay competitive in today's market.

Hotel employees, through their direct contact with tourists, can help promote the different activities and attractions offered on the island. Moreover, by offering steel bands, musicians and/or calypso nights, hotels are exposing tourists to the Barbadian and Caribbean culture, creating a unique experience for their guests. By enhancing the experience of their customers, hotels 1) help encourage visitors to come back to the island and potentially stay again at their hotel; 2) increase the chances for these guests to tell their friends and relatives about their experience, attracting them in return to the island and their properties. Therefore, there appears to be at least two distinct advantages for hotels to promote local culture: such promotion responds

to the current demand for cultural tourism, and also represents interesting marketing advantages distinguishing a hotel from other similar properties.

The findings of this research further revealed that the promotion of local culture by the accommodation sector can also have positive repercussions on the tourism development of host destinations. In fact, the literature increasingly discusses how popular tourist destinations, such as Barbados, need to start looking at new marketing approaches to increase their attractiveness and overall competitiveness. One of these tactics appears to be the development and promotion of new niche markets, such as cultural tourism, since this approach would help tourist nations differentiate their products and services from other similar destinations. The development of these new markets can be encouraged by certification programs such as Green Globe, since by pushing hotels to adhere to cultural criteria, cultural tourism can expand at the host destination. Therefore, local authorities and certification programs need to work together since the unification of their forces could potentially increase the chances of developing new niche markets. At the end, this approach can become a winning situation for everyone: by adhering to cultural indicators, certified hotels are helping develop cultural tourism while providing their guests with a unique experience; this situation can entice tourists to return to the island and/or spread the word to their relatives and friends; in return, Barbados continues to experience a high volume of annual tourist arrivals, creating additional revenues to the local population as a whole.

#### **6.3.4 Other Benefits of Socio-Cultural Criteria**

Several authors discuss how environmental criteria are often viewed by tourism businesses to be easier and cheaper to implement compared to socio-cultural ones, leading to a low adherence level of these companies to social and cultural practices (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004; Font & Sasidharan, 2001). The results of this thesis challenge these perspectives since several of the socio-cultural actions provided by hotel employees do not seem to require a large budget or time commitment to implement. For example, hotels could play Barbadian and/or Caribbean music in the lobby; encourage tourists to use local entrepreneurs; post daily events on a visible board in the lobby; help with annual beach clean-ups, etc. In fact, these criteria may require less financial commitment from the part of hotels compared to certain environmental practices, especially in the case of islands such as Barbados where eco-friendly products tend to be rather expensive due to the country's necessity to import.



It is also important to note that the findings of this research revealed that social and cultural criteria appear to be interconnected at different levels, offering several positive impacts at once. A good example illustrating this connection is the small market organized weekly by the employees of one of the Barbadian certified hotels. In fact, this practice helps promote local culture, while also generating additional income for local vendors and artists. Thus, in the case of socio-cultural criteria, hotels can probably adhere to two indicators at once, helping facilitate the achievement or maintenance of certification. This finding is important since hotels' management and employees currently may not realize that socio-cultural practices cannot only profit the surrounding community, but also benefit their establishments in the longer term potentially offsetting the costs of their implementation.

#### **6.4 Examining Green Globe through an Empirical Lens**

The next section will use the case study of this thesis, Green Globe, to discuss some of the advantages and criticisms found in the literature regarding certification programs and their overall practices, and compare this information with the empirical findings of this research.

##### **6.4.1 First Step towards Sustainability**

Sasidharan et al. (2002) state that certification programs can encourage companies to maintain and improve their performances throughout the years, helping reduce negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts in host communities, and this research tended to support this assertion. In this study, the Barbadian government and other tourism stakeholders are now aiming to embrace a more holistic approach to tourism development since they recognize the importance and necessity to adopt sustainable tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2010). As reported in this thesis, a respondent believes that certification programs are one step that would help the local authorities achieve this goal. Moreover, several respondents discussed how the implementation of Green Globe's criteria can have 'ripple effects' on the rest of the community since employees can potentially adopt at home some of the lessons they learned during their trainings (Hotel Employee 3 & 5). Therefore, certification programs such as Green Globe can become an interesting first step to help host destinations adopt sustainable tourism, providing in return positive environmental, social and cultural repercussions to the rest of the community.

However, the research did not reveal unanimous support for the idea that Green Globe is a *necessary* step toward sustainable tourism. In fact, several respondents challenged the necessity

for hotels to be certified in order to achieve a high level of environmental and socio-cultural practices. Although this statement might be true, most hotel employees nonetheless stated that Green Globe has provided them with goals and objectives to work towards, pushing them to continuously implement responsible practices and guiding them towards more sustainable modes of operation. Therefore, although achieving certification might not be an absolute necessity, it still potentially represents a first step in the codification of ecotourism and sustainable tourism.

#### **6.4.2 Marketing Advantages**

The literature often discusses how certification programs can provide interesting marketing advantages for certified tourism ventures, since through the approved use of certification programs' logos, businesses can advertise their achievements to the general public, hoping that customers would choose their certified property over a 'non-sustainable' one (Johnson, 2002; Mycoo, 2006; Buckley, 2002). The empirical findings of this research challenge this statement and revealed that the reality might be different than alleged by certification programs. In fact, most respondents of the Barbadian certified hotels did not report having experienced increased business since their official certification, further stating that price is currently the main motivator determining where a customer chooses to stay. Therefore, marketing advantages promoted by certification programs such as Green Globe might not be as accurate as alleged. However, the researcher did not investigate this matter further since it was not one of the objectives of this study. Therefore, further research would need to be conducted to uncover the reasons and consequences of this situation.

#### **6.4.3 Expensive**

It is also argued in the literature that the costs for joining certification programs can be extremely high for tourism businesses (Sasidharan et al., 2002). In fact, this criticism was confirmed by the results of this research, since hotels do not only have to cover rather high annual membership fees to be certified with Green Globe, but also have to pay for auditing fees, including the travelling expenses of the auditor. Moreover, in certain occasions, hotel management needs to hire the services of a professional consultant since they might not possess the necessary knowledge or resources to properly implement the needed requirements. Once again, these services are at cost, simply adding up to the overall expenses. Ultimately, this study

revealed that the certification process can be rather costly for certified hotels, especially those which are small or medium-scale enterprises.

It is also important to mention that this study's findings demonstrated that changing to 'greener' modes of operation in order to achieve or renew certification can also be relatively expensive for hotels, especially in the context of small islands like Barbados. Therefore, changing old practices, products and appliances to 'greener' ones, although a necessary step to achieve proper sustainability, can also be rather costly for certified hotels, adding to the aforementioned expenses.

#### **6.4.4 Partnerships**

Throughout the years, Green Globe has established several preferred partnerships with organisations worldwide. As explained in the Chapter Two of this thesis, the CHTA is one of Green Globe's preferred partners. According to Griffin & DeLacy (2002), this affiliation has led to the proliferation of Green Globe memberships in the region since 1997 as the CHTA has been promoting Green Globe as the preferred certification program amongst its different Caribbean hotels and tourism attractions. The findings of this thesis confirmed this literature-based information, with several hotel employees reporting that their establishment decided to achieve certification through Green Globe since the CHTA came to their premises to promote this program as an interesting financial and marketing opportunity. Therefore, it is interesting to note that this type of partnership can potentially lead to a monopoly of certification programs in a host destination since hotel employees might not have the necessary awareness or knowledge of other similar programs.

#### **6.4.5 Higher Presence of Environmental Indicators**

Several authors argue that current certification programs tend to place higher emphasis on the environmental rather than management/socio-cultural aspects of sustainability, reflecting the priorities and definitions of the '80 and '90s (Bendell & Font, 2004; Cordoba & Tepelus, 2005). As demonstrated by figures 4.1 & 4.2, and Table 4.2 in Chapter Four of this thesis, the empirical research supports the contention that Green Globe continues to grant a higher level of importance to environmental principles (over 50%) in comparison to the three other categories (sustainable management, socio-economic and cultural). Unfortunately, the empirical findings of this research were not able to reveal the reasons for this bias. However, Sasidharan et al., 2002

attribute this environmental inclination to certification programs trying to satisfy the donors' agendas and preferences, which tend to be environmentally-oriented due to the alleged profitability of 'green' practices reported in the literature. This situation could potentially be applied to Green Globe's case since this program has been operated as a private company since 1999. However, additional research would need to be conducted on this end to further explore the cause of this environmental inclination.

According to a few authors, the parameters for social and cultural criteria in certification programs are not as well established compared to environmental ones, since socio-cultural criteria are often perceived to be ambiguous and difficult to quantify (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004). Wober (2002) further explains that once these social indicators are measured, the results often become a matter of interpretation (as cited in Font & Harris, 2004, p. 991). This situation has led certification programs to down play socio-cultural criteria in their agendas and focus on environmental criteria. However, as Green Globe's representative explained during her interview, it can sometimes be difficult 'to give a dollar value or percentage on the socio-cultural contributions of hotels as social actions can have several variations; yet, it does not mean they are not achieving the requirement' (Tourism professional 6). In fact, this thesis provided examples of programs and actions that hotel employees can accomplish or have accomplished to successfully implement both social and cultural practices. Further research would need to be conducted regarding how socio-cultural criteria and indicators could successfully be monitored and audited by certification programs.

It is also important to note that, as explained in Chapter Five, the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) provides a relevant example demonstrating the feasibility to successfully implement and monitor socio-cultural requirements. Therefore, current certification programs such as Green Globe could take a closer examination at the CST's practices to determine the reasons for this success and apply them to their own programs.

#### **6.4.6 Flexibility to Choose Indicators**

Chapter Four of this thesis explains how Green Globe requires that tourism businesses adhere to at least 51% of its 337 indicators, regardless of the category they belong to, in order to attain or renew certification (Green Globe Website, 2011). This freedom on the part of Green Globe to let tourism companies choose the criteria and indicators they prefer to achieve, while beneficial

for companies, may come at the cost of sustainability: businesses may simply implement the easiest and most profitable indicators potentially disregarding criteria that are essential to achieve proper or comprehensive sustainability. In the case of this study, a few hotel employees confirmed this situation explaining their tendency to implement the cheapest and easiest indicators first before moving to more complicated practices. On this note, literature discusses how tourism organisations are likely to prefer environmental indicators over socio-cultural ones since the former tend to be perceived as easier to implement and most profitable in the long term (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004; Sasidharan et al., 2002; Font & Sasidharan, 2001). Respondents of this study were divided regarding this perception: on one end, several hotel employees explained that the establishment of environmental criteria has allowed their properties to gain important financial savings in water and electricity bills; on the other end, respondents also discussed how buying eco-friendly products and energy-efficient appliances can be a rather expensive and complicated burden for hotels. Moreover, as explained in section 6.3.4 of this chapter, socio-cultural criteria can sometimes be easier and cheaper to implement compared to environmental practices contrary to what is discussed in current literature.

Although Green Globe's requirements allow an attractive level of flexibility for certified hotels, this freedom is not necessarily desirable since hotel employees can potentially down play criteria (often socio-cultural ones) that are necessary to achieve proper sustainability (Font & Harris, 2004; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005). In the case of this study, findings showed that three hotel employees responsible for implementing Green Globe criteria and indicators were not able to provide a proper definition of either ecotourism or sustainable tourism. This situation raises an important question: is it possible for hotel employees to establish socio-cultural criteria when they do not seem to properly understand the importance of these practices nor what the development of sustainable tourism really involves? According to Shumway (1991), ecotourism and sustainable tourism can serve as guiding principles that despite not being able to be 'proved or measured' can still lead to the establishment of sound practices (as cited in McCool et al., 2001, p. 127). Following this idea, despite the current absence of an international definition on these terms, the researcher believes that personal visions and goals can become guiding principles for hotel employees. In other words, employees who are inclined to have a 'greener' perception of ecotourism and sustainable tourism might have a tendency to mostly implement environmental indicators, ultimately putting aside socio-cultural practices. Therefore, Green

Globe could ensure that hotel employees in charge of the certification process are familiar with the three components of sustainability and that this information is properly conveyed to the rest of the staff.

#### **6.4.7 Auditing Process**

The literature also points out that current certification programs are experiencing a couple of challenges in their auditing procedures: 1) either programs do not have a third-party auditing process in place to verify that tourism businesses are properly achieving the needed requirements or; 2) if an auditing process is in place, the system might not be as transparent as it should be. This last situation was observed in the case of Green Globe, with its third-party auditing process showing several inconsistencies. First of all, the empirical findings revealed that the current representative for the Caribbean region appears to be working both as a consultant and an auditor. This situation raises concerns regarding the transparency and neutrality that the auditor might have towards hotels that he or she helped with consultation services, potentially being inclined to be more clement towards these properties.

Secondly, the research revealed that Green globe's new web-based reporting process actually tends to weaken the auditing process, calling into question the rigour of the certification process. A few hotel employees mentioned that Green Globe used to require large amounts of paper work that rendered the certification process very tedious and time consuming. However, Green Globe has now established the *Green Globe Academy*, a web-based program that has not only eliminated most of the required paper work, but also helps 'users with online registration procedures, course registration and payment, downloadable course material and certification renewal' (Green Globe Brochure, 2011). Through this e-program, certified companies can simply go online, fill in the needed requirements, and automatically renew their certification membership. In fact, a couple of hotel employees claimed that no Green Globe auditor has visited their establishments in over a year, simply completing the necessary information on the website. Although *Green Globe Academy* appears to facilitate and streamline the certification process for hotels, and eliminates the need for visits by auditors, it also raises many 'quality control' issues, such as 'who verifies the reported information' and 'how often is the information reported verified for accuracy', questioning the overall actual performance of Green Globe's certified hotels.

#### **6.4.8 Lack of Destination Specificity**

As explained previously, due to Green Globe's international scope, this certification program was highly criticized in its origins since its criteria was inclined to be globally applied without taking into consideration the needs and specificities of each destination (Buckley, 2002). To remedy this situation and ensure that the needs of each community were customized, Green Globe began providing tailored guidelines and training manuals depending on the geographical location of the tourism company seeking certification (Green Globe Brochure, 2011). According to Buckley (2002), although this approach is a fine starting point, it still puts the onus on the tourism ventures to adopt the practices and procedures that would best suit their needs and those of the communities surrounding them; in several cases, the companies' employees might not have the necessary skills and expertise to accurately assess which models will be the most appropriate for them (Buckley, 2002).

As the findings of this thesis showed, hotel employees sometimes lack the necessary knowledge or personnel to properly implement the requirements or adopt the ones that would best suit their needs. Therefore, despite Green Globe's attempt to tailor its practices to different destinations, hotels might still need to hire professional consultants to have customized training. Moreover, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, Barbados' geographical location, culture, societal concerns and local policies do not always seem to be taken into consideration by Green Globe and its overall practices. Therefore, Green Globe needs to continue working on improving its levels of customization to each destination's needs and capabilities.

#### **6.4.9 Lack of Consideration Regarding Different Types or Scales of Establishments**

Font & Harris (2004) argue that criteria found in current certification programs are likely to be too low for larger scale firms that have the monetary power to achieve higher standards, but too high for smaller enterprises that do not have the financial resources to meet the required criteria. This situation was observed during this study, as the respondents of smaller and medium hotels reported having greater budget and staff restrictions compared to larger certified establishments, slowing down the overall implementation process of the required Green Globe criteria. Therefore, current certification programs need to take into consideration the size of the hotels in their auditing procedures.

Similar to the findings of Chahara et al. (2011) study, the results of this research revealed that Green Globe does not seem to take into consideration that different establishments can offer different type of amenities, affecting the hotel's level of adherence to the required indicators. For example, as explained in the findings section, few respondents mentioned how difficult and unfair it was for Green Globe to ask hotels that have kitchens or kitchenettes in their rooms to perform at the same level as establishments that do not offer these amenities<sup>37</sup>. Therefore, certification programs could also take into consideration the type of establishments and the services they offer in its auditing procedures.

## **6.5 Recommendations to Successfully Implement Green Globe's Criteria**

One of the objectives of this thesis was to provide recommendations on how to successfully achieve and implement both environmental and socio-cultural criteria. Therefore, the researcher compiled ideas of actions and programs that are recommended for certification programs, hotels and the Barbadian authorities to follow in order to increase the chances to successfully adhere to the required Green Globe's criteria and thus, achieve higher levels of sustainability. The next section is divided in three sub-sections: recommendation for Green Globe, recommendations for hotels and recommendations for the Barbadian authorities. In each sub-section, recommendations are provided in bold italic, followed by an extended rationale or justification for each point.

### **6.5.1 Recommendations for Green Globe**

The researcher has the following seven recommendations, in order of importance, to help Green Globe improve its overall practices:

➤ ***Recommendation # 1: Promote a more holistic ecotourism/sustainable tourism concept.*** The literature indicates that although older designations of ecotourism and sustainable tourism tended to have a strong environmental focus in its origins, newer definitions now emphasize the importance of socio-cultural practices as necessary components to properly develop tourism products and services (Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004). Although, the researcher had no access to training materials, and therefore, she is not sure if the employees of the hotels achieving certification are properly trained on ecotourism and sustainable tourism, results of this study showed that there is a current lack of proper understanding of these terms. In

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<sup>37</sup> Guests staying at hotels with kitchens and kitchenettes might be bringing food and provisions from outside the property, or using non-recyclable materials to carry this food, creating additional waste for the hotel.



fact, the three hotel employees responsible for implementing Green Globe's criteria were not able to provide a comprehensive definition of ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that Green Globe provides the employees of its certified properties proper training material on these concepts since they are the foundation to properly achieve the certification process.

➤ ***Recommendation # 2: Require that tourism businesses adhere to a minimum number of indicators from each of the four categories before they can achieve or renew certification.***

This strategy is recommended since it would oblige hotel management and their employees to implement indicators from each category (environmental, socio-economic, sustainable management and cultural), preventing tourism businesses from implementing indicators from only one or two categories. This approach would help properly address newer definitions of ecotourism and sustainable tourism.

➤ ***Recommendation # 3: Work closely with national and local authorities of a host destination.*** Rivera (2004) states that national and local governments should be involved in the certification process since this support would help facilitate the implementation and customization of criteria found in these programs. Following this idea, it is recommended that certification programs and local authorities start working together to ensure that Green Globe's required criteria are customized to the needs and capabilities of the host destination.

➤ ***Recommendation # 4: Increase its level of customization to both the destination and the accommodation section.*** It is recommended that Green Globe's auditors start taking into consideration the size of the hotel seeking or renewing certification; the different amenities hotels offer their guests, and; the culture and different policies and programs of a host destination, since these characteristics can affect a property's level of adherence to the required indicators.

➤ ***Recommendation # 5: Offer different stages of certification.*** It is also recommended that Green Globe starts offering different stages of certification depending on the performance level of tourism businesses. For example, Green Globe could offer three levels of certification, with the lowest rank containing hotels that perform at the required minimum level, and the highest rank containing hotels that perform highly above the basic requirements. In fact, as described in Chapter Two, the CST can be a good example to follow since this certification program offers

six different categories (zero to five leaves) depending on how the tourism companies perform. This tactic would potentially encourage tourism businesses renewing certification to regularly attain higher levels of performance.

➤ ***Recommendation # 6: Use the PPT model for ideas of socio-cultural criteria.*** It is recommended that Green Globe examines at the PPT model and adopt some of the activities promoted by the latter in its agenda. This approach would help certification programs such as Green Globe have additional ideas of the type of social and cultural activities that tourism businesses could adopt to become more socially and culturally responsible.

➤ ***Recommendation # 7: Conduct advertising campaigns geared to educate tourists on the practices and implications of its program.*** Findings of this study showed that tourists or community members might not be familiar with Green Globe and its overall practices. Therefore, it is recommended that Green Globe conducts an advertising campaign to promote its program. This promotion would help inform travellers of the existence of this certification program, potentially increasing Green Globe's marketing advantages to its certified hotels.

### **6.5.2 Recommendations at the Hotel Level**

The results of this study allowed the researcher to compile a list of actions that hotels seeking or renewing certification could take into consideration in order to improve its chances of successfully implementing Green Globe's required indicators. The following six recommendations at the hotel level are suggested, in order of importance:

➤ ***Recommendation # 8: Address the improper understanding of ecotourism and sustainable tourism.*** Similar to the recommendation made to Green Globe in the previous subsection, it is also recommended that hotel management and its employees familiarize themselves with the newer and more comprehensive definitions of these terms. As explained previously, the three hotel employees responsible for implementing Green Globe criteria were not able to provide a comprehensive definition of ecotourism or sustainable tourism. This situation could potentially lead to hotel management and its employees to implement criteria from one or two category, down-playing criteria that are still essential to achieve sustainability. Therefore, it is recommended that hotel management seek training (perhaps from Green Globe's consultants) to ensure that hotel employees embrace and properly understand sustainability.

➤ ***Recommendation # 9: Have one person dedicated full-time to the certification process.***

Several respondents discussed how the certification process has been slow and sometimes complicated since some of the hotel employees responsible for implementing the required indicators were doing this task on a voluntary basis and on top of their regular duties. Thus, it is recommended that hotel management employs one person that would be dedicated full-time to the certification process, such as an 'Environmental Officer. This approach' would help accelerate and improve the overall process. This person needs to be familiar with the new definitions of ecotourism and sustainable tourism.

➤ ***Recommendation # 10: Have a management team that altruistically believes that protecting the environment, and being socially and culturally involved, are significant priorities.*** The neo-institutional theory declares that management decisions and practices are not only induced by economic reasons, but that norms, values and traditions also have an influence on their operations since it gives a sense of social legitimacy to tourism ventures (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991; Scott 1995, as cited in Rivera 2004). In other words, social pressure and fear of public embarrassment would motivate management of these companies to environmentally and socio-culturally perform (Rivera, 2004). Similar to these statements, several hotel employees in this study explained that their establishments decided to achieve certification due to an altruistic concern to help conserve Barbados' natural resources, while helping improve the general well-being of the Barbadian community. Therefore, it is recommended that hotel owners employ a management team that has an altruistic desire to help the hotel become more environmentally, socially and culturally responsible. This approach can help increase the hotel's chances of successfully implementing indicators from each of the four Green Globe categories.

➤ ***Recommendation # 11: Educate all hotel employees, with a special focus on the younger generation.*** It is recommended that hotel management educates all its employees on the benefits of being environmentally friendly and socio-culturally responsible, specially focusing on the younger employees, since according to a few respondents, older generations tend to be more set in their ways and thus, more resistant to change. By taking this approach, hotels might be increasing their chances to change their modes of operation and implement the necessary requirements. It is also recommended that this education shows employees that implementing environmental and socio-cultural criteria is not only for the hotel's benefit, but also for the future of their children and their island.

➤ ***Recommendation # 12: Constantly think outside the box.*** It is recommended that hotel management and its employees constantly think outside the box when implementing the required indicators. As a tourism professional explains, hotels should take the ‘4 R’s approach: rethink, reuse, recycle, and reduce’ (Tourism professional 10).

➤ ***Recommendation # 13: Become involved with the local community.*** It is recommended that hotel management organizes Town Hall meetings with the community at least once a year since this approach helps hotels present new projects and discuss of its ramifications with the local community. Moreover, hotel employees might be more inclined to implement environmental and socio-cultural modes of operation if they see that their hotel is involved in their community. Winning awards or being mentioned in local newspapers can also create pride amongst the hotel’s employees and encourage them to continue putting effort in the good direction.

### **6.5.3 Recommendations for Barbados’ local authorities**

The results of this study found several actions that Barbadian local authorities should implement in order to achieve higher levels of sustainability. The researcher has the following five recommendations to make, in order of importance:

➤ ***Recommendation # 14: Promote a more holistic ecotourism/sustainable tourism concept.*** Similar to the recommendations made to both Green Globe and the accommodation sector, it is recommended that the Barbadian authorities provide training to its employees and other tourism stakeholders on the newer definitions of ecotourism and sustainable tourism. This approach would ensure that everyone involved in the promotion and development of tourism in Barbados works under the same definitions of these terms, properly developing sustainable tourism on the island.

➤ ***Recommendation # 15: Work closely with Green Globe and the Barbadian certified hotels.*** It is recommended that the Barbadian government works closely with Green Globe and its certified hotels to ensure that the criteria and overall practices of the latter are tailored to the country’s needs and capabilities. In the case of this study, although respondents did not mention this information directly, it was clear at certain points that government support would have been beneficial in the successful implementation of certain indicators. The current situation of recycling on the island offered a relevant example demonstrating this situation: 1) it would be

easier for hotels to recycle if there was a national system in place providing recycling bins, and regularly collecting the recyclable materials; 2) thanks to national promotion, Barbadians have started to learn and understand the importance of recycling and thus, it is easier for hotel employees to train their employees on how to properly implement this practice. Moreover, the study conducted by Rivera (2004) showed how institutional forces can encourage hotel facilities to partake in certification programs and force them to have higher levels of compliance to environmental and socio-cultural criteria. In the case of this study, respondents reported that Green Globe's auditing process might not be as transparent as promoted and therefore, government supervision would help ensure that certification programs are properly auditing the necessary requirements. By working together, Green Globe, the certified hotels and local authorities will make sure that tourism development is conducted in a responsible and sustainable fashion, protecting the island's natural and human resources for future generations to come.

➤ ***Recommendation # 16: Link agriculture to tourism.*** Although the Barbadian government has started to provide programs and incentives to help small farmers (ADMC, 2003, as cited in Momsen, 2005), there is a present need to create policies and programs that would link the agricultural sector to tourism. This strategy will help create employment and additional income for local farmers, while reducing the country's dependence on imported goods. Consequently, Barbadian hotels would be able to encourage local products adhering in return to one of Green Globe's indicators. Thus, it is recommended that the government intervenes at this level, offering incentives and training programs to local farmers. According to a few respondents, this approach would become a win-win situation for both parties: government financial and human support would help improve the agricultural sector, helping create in return more employment on the island, while decreasing Barbados' reliance on imported goods. Consequently, the accommodation sector would also benefit since it would be able to buy local food and products, encouraging local farmers while adhering to Green Globe's criteria (Tourism professionals 3, 4 & 10, 2011).

➤ ***Recommendation # 17: Expand recycling programs nationally.*** Since the country is currently undertaking a rather strong promotional recycling campaign, it is recommended that the local authorities establish a national system that provides recycling bins to its residents and

trucks to collect the recyclable materials on a regular basis. This approach would help facilitate the recycling process for both the local community and the accommodation sector.

➤ ***Recommendation # 18: Have a better promotion of its tourism goals and policies.*** While *The White Paper for Tourism Development* (2010) was accessible at the Bridgetown Public Library, the respondents that participated in this study did not seem aware of this document or the information it included. Therefore, it is recommended that the Barbadian government ensures a better promotion of its tourism goals and policies to the local population as this approach will help ensure that tourism professionals share and work towards the same vision.

## **6.6 Research Implications**

### **6.6.1 Implications for Academia**

The empirical research in this thesis has sought to examine three distinct themes currently present in academic literature: certification programs; ecotourism and sustainable tourism; and the socio-cultural aspect of tourism development. This study has contributed to these three themes individually as well as in relationship with one another, since this examination led to a better understanding of certification programs and their overall practices.

Current literature on certification programs tends to focus on the environmental side of these programs (Font & Harris, 2004; Bendell & Font, 2004; Ayuso, 2007; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005). Few studies have concentrated on studying the socio-cultural components of certification programs (Font & Sasidharan, 2001; Medina, 2005; Carrier & MacLeod, 2005) and thus, this study attempted to remedy this academic gap. Several authors have attributed this environmental tendency to the fact that concepts such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism had a strong environmental focus in their origins (Bendell & Font, 2004; Font & Harris, 2004). However, as shown in the literature review of this thesis, these terms have evolved and now recognize the important relationship that exists between environment, community and culture within tourism development (Carrier & MacLeod, 2005; Medina, 2005; Font & Harris, 2004). Despite this evolution, the findings of this thesis showed that there is still a current bias or misinterpretation of both ecotourism and sustainable tourism, with respondents having mostly focused on the environmental side of these terms when defining them. This finding is important since it demonstrates that despite the evolution of these concepts in the literature, these terms still have a

strong environmental meaning to interviewees working in the tourism sector. The researcher believes that this misunderstanding can affect tourism development at several levels, particularly in the case of certification programs since their programs are based on the implementation and codification of these principles.

Empirical research in this thesis also showed that the culture, social situation, geography, policies and/or programs of tourist destinations can shape and influence certification programs. This information is important as no previous academic studies were found examining at how these elements can affect these programs, with only a handful of authors having commented on the impact of these factors on certification programs (Buckley, 2002; Medina, 2005; Mycoo, 2006). Therefore, this information provides new and useful information to current literature on certification programs.

This research also challenges existing literature that perceives concern for socio-cultural elements of tourism to be non-lucrative for tourism businesses (Font & Sasidharan, 2001; Sasidharan et al, 2002; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005). In fact, the empirical findings of this study provided reasons and potential benefits that the accommodation sector would gain by adopting social and cultural criteria. Furthermore, this research revealed how several socio-cultural criteria can potentially be cheaper to implement compared to environmental practices. This information can potentially be used as platform to undertake new studies on the benefits that tourism ventures such as hotels can gain when adopting socio-cultural practices in their daily operations.

As explained in section 6.4 of this chapter, findings of this thesis helped support and/or refute some of the information found in present literature relating to the overall practices of current certification programs. Empirical results showed that Green Globe can provide hotel employees and other tourism professionals with a goal to work towards, helping codify in return ecotourism and sustainable tourism. However, as described in current literature, Green Globe tends to face similar challenges than other certification programs, such as being rather expensive, having a strong environmental tendency and tending to lack specificity towards both the destination and different types of establishments. Moreover, an important and unexpected finding was revealed regarding the alleged marketing advantages that certification programs can represent for tourism businesses (Johnson, 2002; Buckley, 2002; Mycoo, 2006). In fact, empirical results demonstrated that most interviewees attached to certified hotels that participated in this study have not seen the

marketing benefits promoted by Green Globe. This information is important as it adds to the current body of literature, potentially opening doors for future research.

Finally, research for this thesis was conducted in Barbados, a country that is part of the Small Island Developing States. These nations tend to share several physical and social similarities amongst each other that are important for certification programs to consider as these characteristics can potentially affect implementation and auditing processes. The researcher only found one other similar study conducted in such a setting (Mycoo, 2006) and therefore, results of this thesis add to current literature since it examines how certification programs and their overall practices apply to the case of small islands.

### **6.6.2 Implications for Policy and Planning**

Successful destination policy and planning in popular tourist destinations such as Barbados rests on developing strong partnerships among the different stakeholders and on a consistent and collaborative approach to sustainable and responsible tourism development. This approach is particularly important in the case of certification programs since these programs need to work with local authorities and the accommodation sector to ensure that their criteria and auditing processes are customized to the needs and capabilities of the destination.

Barbados is a popular tourist destination whose government has started to recognize the necessity of adopting responsible policy and planning tactics in order to remain viable in today's market and attractive for future years to come. As shown by the findings of this study, certification programs can become powerful tools for local authorities to achieve this type of goals and objectives. Furthermore, these programs can also help destinations develop new niche markets since popular tourist nations must start finding products and services that differentiate them from other similar destinations. In fact, by asking hotels to adhere to cultural criteria, certification programs indirectly encourage the development and expansion of cultural tourism at the host destination. Therefore, the Barbadian government, the accommodation sector and certification programs could work in partnership to pursue differentiation strategies.

It is too often that tourism policies and/or programs simply try to address the environmental challenges of host destinations while disregarding the impacts that tourism development can also have on the local community and its culture. Carrier & MacLeod explain (2005) that socio-cultural parameters are as crucial as conserving a destination's natural habitat, since tourism



ventures could potentially damage the social and cultural identity of host communities, disturb their traditional lifestyle and generally affect the population's quality of life. In the case of this study, Barbados represents a relevant example illustrating this situation. Despite its small territory, this island welcomes over 500 000 tourists annually, almost twice its permanent population size. With such a high volume of visitors, is it at all possible to dissociate the impacts that tourism can have on the environment, community and culture of this country? The findings of this research demonstrated that it is unrealistic to separate these three elements as they all appear to be interconnected: the transformation of natural resources can alter local livelihoods, changing in return cultural attitudes and traditions. Therefore, it becomes important for local governments and tourism professionals of host destinations –including hotels and certification programs- to adopt comprehensive policies and strategies to tourism development, addressing environmental, social and cultural issues all together and not on a separate basis.

It is also important to note that the current misunderstandings of key concepts, such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism, can have important implications on policy and planning. First of all, the different interpretations of these terms amongst tourism professionals (local residents, government agencies, private sector) can ultimately lead to everyone performing under their own perception or definition of ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Therefore, policy-makers and planners need to arrive to a consensus regarding how sustainable tourism should be achieved to ensure that all stakeholders of a destination work under the same vision. Secondly, it is important that these definitions include socio-cultural components and not only environmental elements in order to reflect the newer designations of ecotourism and sustainable tourism. These two approaches will help popular tourist destinations like Barbados ensure that all its stakeholders work towards the same objectives, while adopting a holistic approach to tourism development.

Finally, findings also helped provide a list of actions that hotels and their employees can undertake to adopt environmental (section 5.3.2.1), social (section 5.3.2.2) and cultural practices (section 5.3.2.3). It is hoped that this information will provide the accommodation sector with examples on how to implement certain indicators, especially in cases where hotel employees have no previous knowledge or experience on the matter. This thesis also provided important recommendations that would need to be considered by certification programs, hotels and the Barbadian government in order for these programs to increase their chances of properly

implementing the necessary requirements. Once again, it is hoped that this information will guide hotel employees in the future, informing them of potential challenges they might encounter during the implementation process and offering solutions on how to overcome these obstacles.

### **6.6.3 Implications for Certification Programs**

Certification programs and their related practices are often criticized in the literature for an array of different reasons. Despite these rather negative reviews, results of this study showed that these programs can still represent a first step for tourism ventures such as hotels to implement responsible practices aiming to safeguard the natural, human and cultural resources of a destination. Moreover, these programs can also have interesting ‘ripple effects’ on the rest of the local community since employees can teach their families the lessons they acquired at their workplace. Therefore, certification programs appear to be at an important turning point where decisions need to be taken in order to improve its current practices and services. This thesis has pinpointed some of these issues and provided a few solutions on how to potentially solve some of these challenges.

The research outlined several benefits that hotels could gain by adhering to a balance of environmental, social and cultural practices. Certification programs such as Green Globe could use this information to convince hotels to not only adhere to environmental criteria, but also to socio-cultural ones. In fact, results showed that socio-cultural practices can have lead to marketing advantages for hotels, sometimes even being cheaper to implement than ‘greener’ modes of operation. It is hoped that this information will encourage certification programs and hotels to adopt socio-cultural criteria in their programs which in return will fully address proper sustainability. Moreover, this research provided examples of actions and projects that the accommodation sector can undertake to implement environmental, social and cultural indicators. This information can be used by certification programs during their training and/or consultation services as it can provide hotel employees with ideas of how to achieve the required indicators, and recommendations on what to do or avoid to effectively achieve certification.

The results of this study also revealed that culture, social factors, geography, policies and/or programs of a destination can influence certification programs and the implementation of the necessary indicators, especially in the case of ex-colonial societies and Small Island Developing States. In the case of this study, results showed that Green Globe’s practices do not always seem

tailored to the Barbadian reality, raising in return an important question: can an international certification program such as Green Globe become adequately customized to respond to the needs and capabilities of every destination? The literature seems divided on the matter, with certain authors claiming that national programs would better suit the needs of each destination (Rivera, 2004; Epler et al., 2001, as cited in Medina, 2005) while others argue that the latter approach would only increase the already large volume of certification programs, creating further confusion amongst tourism professionals, customers and hotels (Buckley, 2002; Sasidharan et al., 2002). Although the results of this research cannot provide an answer to such an important question, the researcher believes that Green Globe represents a good first initiative that needs to work harder towards the tailoring of its criteria and auditing processes. This thesis has identified a few recommendations on how to work on some of these current challenges, hoping that this information will be helpful for Green Globe and other certification programs.

## **6.7 Future Research Directions**

This thesis sought to fill an important academic gap by evaluating the importance and feasibility of adopting socio-cultural criteria in current certification programs. However, the researcher acknowledges that the empirical findings of this study also uncovered other areas that would benefit from further research. First of all, since socio-cultural criteria tend to be dependent on the country's culture, historical background and geography, it would be beneficial to conduct similar studies in other settings, especially in other tourist destinations located in developing and continental countries. The results of these studies can then be compared in order to find any commonalities and disparities on how criteria and auditing processes apply to developed nations in contrast to developing ones. This information would be advantageous to Green Globe since it could help this program increase its level of customization to different types of host destinations.

The literature often discusses how socio-cultural criteria might be difficult to quantify for certification programs, with results becoming a matter of interpretation on the auditor's part. Therefore, additional research would need to be conducted regarding the feasibility of socio-cultural indicators to be successfully audited by certification programs. It is hoped that this type of study would further encourage these programs to include and/or make mandatory socio-cultural criteria in their agendas. Moreover, as the promotion of culture by tourism professionals can be a rather delicate matter, potentially leading to the commodification of local customs,

additional research could be conducted investigating the impacts that cultural promotion by the accommodation sector can have on local traditions. This research can help explore approaches that hotel management and employees could adopt to ensure that the cultural experience they are providing their guests with is as authentic and genuine as possible.

The findings of this thesis also revealed two emerging themes that need to be further studied. First of all, additional research could examine the lack of connection that currently exists between agriculture and tourism as these two sectors seem to be interconnected<sup>38</sup> and would benefit from working in close partnership. This type of study would not only apply to Barbados' case, but also to other destinations that are currently experiencing similar situations. Secondly, this thesis also revealed that the marketing advantages currently being promoted by certification programs might not be as accurate as alleged. As this theme was not the focal point of this study, the researcher did not further examine this question and thus, more research could be conducted on the tourists side to analyse their level of awareness to these programs, and their underlying motivations when choosing at which establishment to stay.

Finally, the researcher acknowledges that this topic would also benefit from a quantitative perspective in order to statistically determine the adherence level of certified hotels to the different indicators. This type of research would help solidify the results of this study, potentially raising new questions and opening doors for further research.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This research has sought to fill an important academic gap by examining the socio-cultural side of certification programs. The main conclusion of this study is that socio-cultural practices are necessary components to properly achieve newer designations of ecotourism and sustainable tourism, and therefore, certification programs need to include and/or make mandatory socio-cultural criteria in their programs. In order to encourage certification programs to embrace this approach, examples were provided throughout this thesis demonstrating the feasibility of achieving these indicators, the benefits that hotels can gain by becoming socially and culturally responsible, and the existing connection between environment, community and culture. It is

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<sup>38</sup> A few examples of this connection include: mandating that a certain proportion of food served in a particular hotel be sourced locally, incorporating agro-tourism into the socio-cultural tourism 'product' or providing financial support to help diversify the agricultural sector in order for hotels to buy more products from local farmers.

hoped that this information will encourage certification programs such as Green Globe to change its current practices and take a more holistic approach to tourism development.

As the results of this research have shown, certification programs can represent both challenges and opportunities for host destinations and their accommodation sector. Perceived by some as a good first initiative that provides specific goals to work towards, others describe Green Globe as an expensive program that is currently facing several difficulties hindering its overall success. Despite these apparent challenges, certification programs appear to be important tools to assist in the codification of ecotourism and sustainable tourism, indirectly providing positive repercussions to the surrounding communities. However, these programs need to start working towards the improvement of its different weaknesses granting special attention to the inclusion of socio-cultural criteria in their programs in order to fully embrace sustainability.

This thesis also showed that the culture, geography, social situation and policies of a destination can influence the implementation and auditing processes of certification programs. This finding raises an important concern regarding the level of customization that an international program can have to the needs and capabilities of a country: Would regional and/or national programs provide more successful results than international programs? Although the findings of this study cannot answer such a critical question, it is important to acknowledge that international certification programs like Green Globe have several advantages. It just becomes imperative that these programs work with local authorities and tourism stakeholders from host destinations to ensure that its indicators and auditing processes are tailored to the nation's reality.

Results of this study challenged current literature that claims that socio-cultural criteria tend to be non-lucrative for tourism businesses. In fact, results showed that these practices can provide interesting marketing advantages to the accommodation sector that cannot be overlooked by the latter since they can provide financial gains in the longer term. Moreover, empirical findings appear to contradict to a certain extent the current perception in the literature that green initiatives are easier and cheaper to implement compared to socio-cultural practices. It is hoped that this information will help encourage hotel management and their employees to become more socially and culturally responsible. Moreover, recommendations were provided to help hotel employees avoid or solve certain challenges that can emerge during the implementation process

of the required indicators, hopefully helping increase their level of success in the overall certification process.

When considering all the challenges that certification programs are currently facing, important questions emerge: do tourism businesses really need to join these programs and pay membership fees in order to have responsible modes of operation? Based on the results of this study, the researcher does not believe membership in programs such as Green Globe is the only way to achieve tourism sustainability although it is highly suggested. In fact, certification programs can provide hotel management and employees with goals and objectives to work towards, helping them achieve more sustainable practices. This approach is particularly advised for hotel employees that have no previous experience on the matter and do not know where to start. When a responsible system is in place, do companies need to continuously maintain certification? Once again, the researcher does not believe it is necessary. However, it is strongly suggested since continued re-certification will ensure the constant implementation of responsible practices. With no one to monitor the hotel's performance levels, hotel management and their employees might relax in the longer term, half implementing the needed requirements to properly address sustainability.

This thesis has contributed to academia by examining the socio-cultural side of certification programs. Moreover, the implication of this study for policy-makers and planners was discussed since these programs represent a good initiative to implement responsible systems at the host destination. The researcher acknowledges that there is still room for additional research on this topic, and thus, recommendations were provided on potential future research projects that would help continue working towards the enhancement of current certification programs.

Although this thesis focused on certification programs and their overall practices, the researcher hopes that through this case study she was able to demonstrate the feasibility and importance for tourism policy-makers, planners and developers to adopt socio-cultural components to their policies and plans since tourism does not only affect the environment of the host destination, but also its community and culture. It is by taking a holistic and complete approach to tourism development that popular tourist destinations such as Barbados will continue to be attractive destinations for many generations to come, while helping improve the general well-being of local communities.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**List of Respondents per Sub-Group Category**

## **List of Respondents per Sub-Group Category**

### **Tourism Professionals**

Interview 1: Anonymous (Future Trust Centre) – June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011

Interview 2: Anonymous (CaribSave) – July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 3: Anonymous (CaribSave) – July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 4: Anonymous (Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage) – July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 5: Anonymous (Bellairs Research Institute) – June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 6: Anonymous (Green Globe) – July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 7: Anonymous (CaribSave) – June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 8: Anonymous (Bellairs Research Institute) – June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 9: Anonymous (National Conservation Commission) – June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 10: Anonymous (CHENACT) – July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 11: Anonymous (Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association) – July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

### **Hotel Employees**

Interview 1: Anonymous (Sunny Beach Hotel, Assistant-Manager) – June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011

Interview 2: Anonymous (Blue Reef and Red Mahogany Hotels, General Manager) – July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 3: Anonymous (Barbados Resort, Social Coordinator & Environmental Officer) – July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 4: Anonymous (The Green Monkey, Environmental Officer) – July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011

Interview 5: Anonymous (The Blue Flying Fish, Managing Director) – July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 6: Anonymous (The Blue Flying Fish, Guest Services Manager & Environmental Officer) – July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 7: Anonymous (The Easterly, owner) – July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 8: Anonymous (The Easterly, gardener) – June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011

### **Community members**

Interview 1: Anonymous (Library assistant) – June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 2: Anonymous (Scuba Diving Instructor) – June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 3: Anonymous (Librarian) – June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 4: Anonymous (Electrician) – June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Interview 5: Anonymous (Arts and crafts vendor) – July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 6: Anonymous (Beach vendor) – June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 7: Anonymous (Guesthouse owner) – June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 8: Anonymous (Librarian) – June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 9: Anonymous (Library assistant) – June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 10: Anonymous (Taxi driver) – July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 11: Anonymous (Clerk typist) – June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 12: Anonymous (Street vendor) – June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 13: Anonymous (Beach vendor) – June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 14: Anonymous (Salesman) – June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 15: Anonymous (Arts and jewellery vendor) – June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 16: Anonymous (Jewellery vendor) – July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 17: Anonymous (Vendor) – July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 18: Anonymous (Vendor) – July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 19: Anonymous (Gardener) – July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 20: Anonymous (Fruit vendor) – July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 21: Anonymous (Jewellery vendor) – July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 22: Anonymous (Guesthouse owner) – June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 23: Anonymous (YMCA) – July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 24: Anonymous (Vendor) – July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Interview 25: Anonymous (Scuba diving instructor) – July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011



**APPENDIX B**  
**Questionnaire for the**  
**Semi-Structured Interviews with Tourism Professionals**

## **Questionnaire for the Semi-Structured Interviews with Tourism Professionals**

**NOTE:** These questions were used as guiding reference during the semi-structured interviews. However, due to time restrictions during certain interviews, some questions had to sometimes be omitted (see section 3.5.2.1 for further explanations).

Respondent:

Gender:

Position:

Age category (18-25, 26-35, 35-45, 46-51, and 51 plus):

### **Section A: Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism**

- 1) Have you heard of the term ecotourism before?
- 2) If yes, what does ecotourism mean to you?  
(If not, pass to question 3)
- 3) Have you heard of the term sustainable tourism before?
- 4) If yes, what does sustainable tourism mean to you?  
(If not, pass to question 5)

### **Section B: Responsibility of Hotels**

- 5) Do you think hotels should or should not implement environmental programs? Why?
- 5a) Can you name a few examples of the type of environmental programs that hotels could implement?
- 6) Do you think hotels should or should not promote local culture? Why?
- 6a) Can you name a few examples of how hotels can help promote local culture?
- 7) Do you think hotels should or should not help the local community? Why?
- 7a) Can you name a few examples of how hotels can help the local community?
- 8) Do you think hotels have an impact (either negative or positive) on the general well-being of the local community? Why?

### **Section C: Green Globe**

- 9) Have you heard of Green Globe before?
- 9a) If yes, what do you know about this program?  
(If not, pass to question 10)

9b) Do you think it has positive or negative repercussions on the island? How? Why?

#### **Section D: Societal Concerns**

10) Can you name three societal concerns that are currently happening on the island and that should be addressed by the government? You can use the following list as reference or provide any other examples that you can think of.

- Create employment opportunities for local residents
- Protect the local environment from pollution of air, water, soil
- Establish garbage bins and recycling programs to minimize waste in your community
- Establish programs to help protect natural reserves and other nature sensitive areas
- Help protect the local culture from foreign products and services
- Create programs to fight drug abuse amongst adolescents
- Improve the economy of the area by encouraging tourists to eat at local restaurants
- Improve the local economy by encouraging tourists to buy local products and services
- Create programs to decrease violence in the community
- Establish communication between hotels and the community to ensure that tourism reflects the reality of the local community
- Provide youth educational programs
- Provide access to school to all the members of the community

Can you think of any other societal needs?

11) Any final thoughts/comments?

**APPENDIX C**  
**Questionnaire for the**  
**Semi-Structured Interviews with Community Members**

## **Questionnaire for the Semi-Structured Interviews with Community Members**

**NOTE:** These questions were used as guiding reference during the semi-structured interviews. However, due to time restrictions during certain interviews, some questions had to sometimes be omitted (see section 3.5.2.1 for further explanations).

Respondent:

Gender:

Position:

Age category (18-25, 26-35, 35-45, 46-51, and 51 plus):

### **Section A: Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism**

- 1) Have you heard of the term ecotourism before?
- 2) If yes, what does ecotourism mean to you?  
(If not, pass to question 3)
- 3) Have you heard of the term sustainable tourism before?
- 4) If yes, what does sustainable tourism mean to you?  
(If not, pass to question 5)

### **Section B: Responsibility of Hotels**

- 5) Do you think hotels should or should not implement environmental programs? Why?
- 5a) Can you name a few examples of environmental programs that hotels could implement?
- 6) Do you think hotels should or should not promote local culture? Why?
- 6a) Can you name a few examples of how hotels can help promote local culture?
- 7) Do you think hotels should or should not help the local community? Why?
- 7a) Can you name a few examples of how hotels can help the local community?
- 8) Do you think hotels have an impact (either negative or positive) on the general well-being of the local community? Why?

### **Section C: Green Globe**

- 9) Have you heard of Green Globe before?
- 9a) If yes, what do you know about this program?  
(If not, pass to question 10)
- 9b) Do you think it has positive or negative repercussions on the island? How? Why?

## **Section D: Societal Concerns**

10) Can you name three societal concerns that are currently happening on the island and that should be addressed by the government? You can use the following list as reference or provide any other examples that you can think of.

- Create employment opportunities for local residents
- Protect the local environment from pollution of air, water, soil
- Establish garbage bins and recycling programs to minimize waste in your community
- Establish programs to help protect natural reserves and other nature sensitive areas
- Help protect the local culture from foreign products and services
- Create programs to fight drug abuse amongst adolescents
- Improve the economy of the area by encouraging tourists to eat at local restaurants
- Improve the local economy by encouraging tourists to buy local products and services
- Create programs to decrease violence in the community
- Establish communication between hotels and the community to ensure that tourism reflects the reality of the local community
- Provide youth educational programs
- Provide access to school to all the members of the community

Can you think of any other societal needs?

11) Any final thoughts/comments?

**APPENDIX D**  
**Questionnaire for the**  
**Semi-Structured Interviews with Hotel Employees**

## **Questionnaire for the Semi-Structured Interviews with Hotel Employees**

**NOTE:** These questions were used as guiding reference during the semi-structured interviews. However, due to time restrictions during certain interviews, some questions had to sometimes be omitted (see section 3.5.2.1 for further explanations).

Respondent:

Gender:

Position:

Age category (18-25, 26-35, 35-45, 46-51, and 51 plus):

### **Section A: Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism**

- 1) Have you heard of the term ecotourism before?
- 2) If yes, what does ecotourism mean to you?  
(If not, pass to question 3)
- 3) Have you heard of the term sustainable tourism before?
- 4) If yes, what does sustainable tourism mean to you?  
(If not, pass to question 5)

### **Section B: Responsibility of Hotels**

- 5) Do you think hotels should or should not implement environmental programs? Why?
- 5a) Can you name a few examples of environmental programs that hotels could implement?
- 6) Do you think hotels should or should not promote local culture? Why?
- 6a) Can you name a few examples of how hotels can help promote local culture?
- 7) Do you think hotels should or should not help the local community? Why?
- 7a) Can you name a few examples of how can hotels help the local community?
- 8) Do you think hotels have an impact (either negative or positive) on the general well-being of the local community? Why?

### **Section C: Green Globe and its Criteria**

- 9) For how long have you been certified?
- 10) Why did your hotel decide to achieve certification?
- 11) Why did your hotel choose Green Globe?



- 12) How has been your experience with Green Globe?
- 13) Any advantages that you have seen to being certified?
- 14) Any challenges to the certification process?
- 15) For each of the following criterion, the following questions were used as guidelines to start discussion:
- Do you meet this criterion? If yes, how?
  - If not, why not?
  - Any challenges you have faced with this criterion?
- a) All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in helping protect the environment.
- b) Promotional and marketing materials are accurate and do not promise more than can be delivered by the business.
- c) The hotel was constructed by respecting traditional rights and did not displace local populations.
- d) Local tools and appropriate materials were used to build the establishment as to minimize environmental impact.
- e) Information about the local culture and cultural heritage is provided to customers.
- f) Information about the natural surroundings is provided to customers.
- g) The hotel attempts to educate customers on the appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour to use in the local community.
- h) The hotel actively supports social community development such as education, health, and sanitation (e.g. financial support, volunteer programs, etc.)
- i) Local residents are employed at this hotel.
- j) Local residents are also employed in management positions.
- k) The hotel offers the opportunity for local artists to sell their crafts at the hotel.
- l) The hotel encourages customers to purchase local crafts, goods and services.
- m) The hotel maintains regular and open communication with the local community to have the community's opinion on diverse tourism projects.
- n) The hotel hires women in an equitable way.

- o) All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in helping manage socio-cultural practices.
  - p) The hotel uses elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its decoration.
  - q) The hotel provides local dishes in their menus.
  - r) The hotel purchases environmentally friendly products for cleaning operations.
  - s) The hotel purchases local food.
  - t) The hotel measures its energy consumption and makes sure that it is careful with the amount of energy used.
  - u) A recycling program is in place at the hotel.
  - v) The hotel encourages local businesses by sending customers to use their services (e.g. guided tours, snorkelling trips, etc.)
  - w) The hotel uses local plants, flowers and trees for landscaping and restoration.
  - x) The hotel helps support environmental programs and natural protected areas.
- 16) Any further comments/thoughts?

**APPENDIX E**  
**Examples of how Green Globe Certified Hotels adhere to**  
**24 of Green Globe Sustainability Criteria**

	Small Size	Medium Size		Large Size		
Criteria	The Easterly	Blue Reef & The Red Mahogany	Sunny Beach Hotel	Barbados Resort	The Green Monkey	The Blue Flying Fish
<b>Certified since</b>	2009	2008	2007	2007	2008	2002
<b>Environment</b>						
The hotel purchases environmentally friendly products for building materials and cleaning operations.	Yes, toilet paper is eco-friendly as well as the cleaning products	Yes, hotel buys products from Nu <sup>39</sup> Barbados	Yes, all low in chemicals, eco-friendly products <sup>40</sup>	Most are biodegradable, but in certain areas it is difficult as it needs stronger products	Yes, products from Nu Barbados	Most of them are from Nu Barbados
Information about the natural surroundings is provided to customers.	-Information provided in-room binders -If the customers ask	Yes, they promote Safari Tours where guests can visit different areas of the island	More about tourist attractions	-Flyers in the lobby and Barbados' magazines in each room -She researched and labelled all the hotel's plants	Information in the rooms regarding endangered turtles and asking to not disturb them when they lay their eggs	In room brochures and magazines
The hotel uses local plants, flowers and trees for landscaping and restoration.	Yes, all local	They are mostly local or at least regional	Yes, to her knowledge	They are mostly local or at least regional	Yes, to her knowledge	Yes, to their knowledge

<sup>39</sup> A company that aims to 'replace harsh chemicals with unique technology helping create a more sustainable environment and healthier conditions for all Barbadians' (NuBarbados, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> The researcher stayed at this hotel for three nights. Although the respondent reported that her hotel only uses eco-friendly products, the researcher observed certain housekeeping personnel using normal 'Windex' and/or 'Clorox' products.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>The Easterly</b>	<b>Blue Reef &amp; The Red Mahogany</b>	<b>Sunny Beach Hotel</b>	<b>Barbados Resort</b>	<b>The Green Monkey</b>	<b>The Blue Flying Fish</b>
All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in helping protect the environment.	Sometimes, not on a regular basis	Small departmental meetings when needed	During high season, every Thursday during 'Staff Cocktail Hour' <sup>41</sup> ,	Twice a year	3-4 times a year	-General training once a year -Small departmental meetings when needed
A recycling program is in place at the hotel.	Yes, but not in the rooms, just in general (barrels outside)	Yes, in the rooms they have separate bins for glasses and plastic	Yes, but a general one, not in the rooms. The employees are in charge of separating it	By the pool and in the restaurant, but not in the rooms. Soon it will be per floor	Yes, but not in the rooms. Housekeeping is in charge of separating it	Not in the rooms, only in the restaurant.
The hotel measures its energy consumption and makes sure that is careful with the amount of energy used.	As much as possible, but did not specify how	Yes, they are part of CHENACT <sup>42</sup>	It tries as much as possible.	As much as possible, but did not specify how	Yes, checks bills regularly	Yes, as much as possible
The hotel helps support environmental programs and natural protected areas.	Not always, only when there is time	-Helps with beach clean-ups -If a turtle lays eggs on the beach, they call the Sea Turtle project (but not directly involved)	Not really	Not directly – simply provides promotional material in rooms and/or lobby	Help with annual beach clean-ups	Yes, directly involved with the Sea Turtle Project

<sup>41</sup> Hotel provides drinks and appetizers to their employees.

<sup>42</sup> An energy efficient program whose mission is to 'improve the competitiveness of small and medium sized hotels (<400 rooms) in the Caribbean Region through improved use of energy' ('CHENACT', 2010).

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<b>Sustainable Management</b>						
Promotional and marketing materials are accurate and do not promise more than what business delivers.	Most of the time	Yes	Yes	Most of the time	Yes	Yes
Training sessions are regularly offered to current staff.	Not on a regular basis – but small staff so information circulates easy	Sometimes, due to a lack of resources	Yes, throughout high season, every Thursday during ‘Staff Cocktail Hour’	-Twice a year -Memos circulating regularly -Jobs promoted internally first	2-3 times a year	Once a year
The hotel maintains regular and open communication with the local community to have the community’s opinion on diverse tourism projects.	Not really	Not really	Does not know since she is not involved at that level	Does not know since she is not involved at that level	Not necessarily	Not really
The hotel was constructed by respecting traditional rights and did not displace local populations.	Yes, the land was empty before	Did not know	Did not know	Did not know	Plantations were here before, but to her knowledge, did not displace people	Plantations were here before, but to her knowledge, did not displace people
Local tools and appropriate materials were used to build the establishment as to minimize environmental impact.	Yes, used wood over concrete since wood is more resistant to sea spray	Did not know	General answer: ‘Built with purpose and great material’ (Hotel employee 1, 2011)	Did not know	Materials are from Barbados, but built by a company from Trinidad as it was cheaper	Hotel built with concrete: not the freshest for Barbados humid weather

Criteria	The Easterly	Blue Reef & The Red Mahogany	Sunny Beach Hotel	Barbados Resort	The Green Monkey	The Blue Flying Fish
<b>Socio-Economic</b>						
Local residents are employed at this hotel.	Except the owner, all local employees	All local residents	Yes	Mostly Bajans – only 1-2% are foreigners	Yes, all locals. However, hotel owned by Americans	Yes, except them (two managers)
Local residents are also employed in management positions.	No real management positions because small hotel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, except them (two managers)
The hotel hires women in an equitable way.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The hotel encourages customers to purchase local crafts, goods and services.	In- room binders, there is a list of restaurants and places to visit	Yes, but did not explain how	Not really	-Provides brochures/ magazines. -Information in-room binders	Every Monday, hotel organises a small market in its premises <sup>43</sup>	Yes, but did not explain how
The hotel purchases local food.	They buy most of their products from a local farmer. However, meat has to sometimes be imported due to quality/ scarcity on the island	As much as possible, but sometimes hotel needs to import due to quality and scarcity on the island	Very often, but sometimes they have to import (especially meat)	As much as possible, but sometimes hotel needs to import some food due to quality and scarcity on the island	As much as possible, but sometimes hotel needs to import some food due to quality and scarcity on the island	They buy from local suppliers but even they have to import sometimes due to food shortages. Beef is mostly imported

<sup>43</sup> The researcher had the chance to observe and interview two vendors from this small market.

Criteria	The Easterly	Blue Reef & The Red Mahogany	Sunny Beach Hotel	Barbados Resort	The Green Monkey	The Blue Flying Fish
The hotel encourages local businesses by sending customers to use their services (e.g. guided tours, snorkelling trips, etc.),	Often	As much as possible	As much as possible	As much as possible	As much as possible	As much as possible
The hotel actively supports social community development such as education, health, and sanitation (e.g. financial support, volunteer programs, etc.)	Not at all due to a lack of time and budget	-Room night donations to support charity/fund-raising events -Participate in annual beach clean-up	Not really	-Donations of food, rooms and meeting space -Special pricing for employees and sometimes discounts for locals -By paying a fee, locals can use hotel's pool and gym facilities	-Donate old furniture to charity -Donate shred paper to pig farms -Participate in annual beach clean-up	-Provides room/money donations to different charity events -Supports the Sea Turtle Project
<b>Culture</b>						
The hotel uses elements of local art or cultural heritage in its design and decoration.	-Pottery in room from Earth Work (local art store), -Furniture made out of mahogany (local tree)	Paintings in all the rooms are done by local artists and represent images of the island	Yes	Most of it: paintings in the lobby were painted by a local artist	To some extent. As hotel owned by an American chain, some art comes from the US - and that is what the hotel needs to display	Some of the furniture was made in Barbados but not all of it



Information about the local culture and cultural heritage is provided to customers.	-If the customers ask -Barbados' magazine in each room	-Flyers and brochures in the lobby -Information in-room binders and activity centre	It can be provided, but it is mostly information about tourist attractions, such as island tours and catamarans	-Notice board in the lobby -Brochures in the lobby -Barbados' magazine in each room	-Yes, right now promoting mostly Crop Over activities -In-room binders have a list of cultural activities	-Information on selected attractions in-room binder -Brochures in the lobby -Notice board at the entrance listing events -Barbados' magazines in each room
The hotel attempts to educate customers on the appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour to use in the local community.	In each room binder, there is an extra page about appropriate behaviour	No, they let guests use their own discretion	Only if customers ask	In-room binder, there is an extra page about appropriate behaviour	In-room binder, there is an extra page about appropriate behaviour	Not at the moment
The hotel offers the opportunity for local artists to sell their crafts at the hotel.	No, as some tourists might not like that	Yes, every Wednesday during the 'Manager's Cocktail Party' from 6h30 to 8h00	Yes, once a week, 3-4 vendors come and sell their products	Not yet, but pushing for it	-Craft market on Mondays right outside the hotel -ON Tuesdays, during the 'Manager's Cocktail Party'	-Mondays, during the 'Manager's Cocktail Party' -Sunday during lunch time
All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in helping manage socio-cultural practices	No, mostly environmental	Sometimes	Not really, more on environmental practices	Twice a year	Yes, included in general meetings	Once a year, but mostly environmental

